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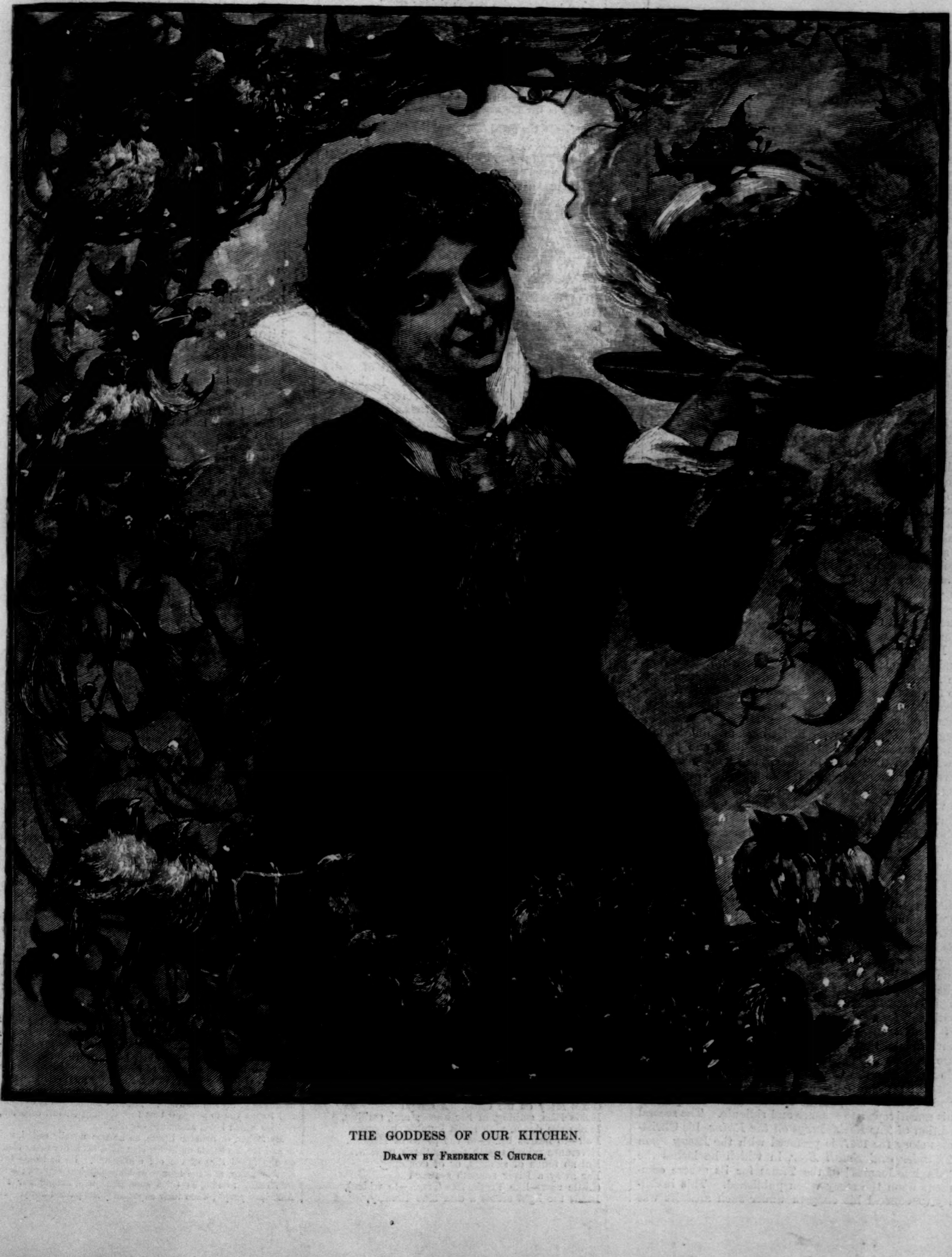

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CHRISTMAS.

THERE are no politics at Christmas, and there shall be none in this paper for Christmas week. It is the season of peace on earth, and its spirit is that of perfect fraternity and good-will. These are, indeed, a season and a spirit which ought to last all the year round, and as the Chinese philosopher in England, seeing that in a Christian land the Christian church was open only on Sunday, asked whether Christianity was suspended during the week, he might also ask whether the spirit of peace and fraternity is in season only at Christmas. If it be so, the general feeling of satisfaction and of kindliness at that time certainly shows how pleasant it would be if the feeling, and the conduct that springs from it, were habitual and permanent. It is the especial festival of children, because the event commemorated is the birth of a child, and it is in childhood that the guilelessness of the spirit which Christmas commemorates is most apparent. Children are the rapt audience of stories, and endless story-telling is associated with the happy day. One of the pleasantest incidents of the Christmas of the last generation in America and England was the holiday story of DICKENS and THACKERAY. Children, young and old, listened eagerly to those tales. The whole world became young again, and sat upon the knee of those magical story-tellers, enchanted. There are still charming writers who tell delightful tales at Christmas, but there are none of so undisputed a supremacy as DICKENS and THACKERAY. Nobody has praised DICKENS's Christmas carols so warmly as THACKERAY, or so accurately described their significance. They are truly carols. They not only smoke and steam with holiday good cheer, which is an essential part of old English Christmas, but they are permeated and glow with the Christmas spirit. Undoubtedly they promoted the national good feeling. Dr. JOHNSON said that GARRICK's death eclipsed the gayety of nations, and it is not less true that DICKENS's pen at Christmas stimulated the charity of nations.

It was probably an unconscious but a most subtle and felicitous art which selected for his first reading in America, after a certain personal estrangement due to the *American Notes* and *Martin Chuzzlewit*, and occasional harsh speeches in private, the opening scenes of the *Christmas Carol*—"Marley was dead, to begin with." Old feuds, ill feelings, misunderstandings, were Marley, and they were dead and passed away; and then came the dissolving tenderness and sweet humor of the Carol, ending with Tiny Tim's catholic benediction, God bless us every one! It was a very happy incident, and doubtless unintentional. But it was as if the offense had been forgiven and the alienation forgotten at a Christmas service and a Christmas feast.

THACKERAY's Christmas tales are not especially seasonable. They do not relate to Christmas except in a touch now and then, as in the beautiful and pathetic epilogue to *Dr. Birch and his Young Friends*, and in amusing allusions like that at the end of *Our Street*, to the Christmas performance of *La Duchesse de Montefiasco*, "of which I forget the plot, but everybody was in love with everybody else's wife, except the hero, Don Alonzo, who was ardently attached to the duchess, who turned out to be his grandmother." The THACKERAY Christmas tales are sparkling and satirical, *jeux d'esprit*, and *The Rose and the Ring* is like a rollicking Christmas pantomime. The shrewdness, the sadness, the remorseless exposure, are all there as in the more elaborate tales. But they do not foster the Christmas spirit. Like CARLYLE, THACKERAY can not escape his impatience with shams and injustice. But, unlike CARLYLE, he shows plainly his sensitiveness to censure and ridicule. The second edition of *The Kickleburys on the Rhine*, his Christmas story for 1857, is prefaced with the *Essay upon Thunder and Small Beer*, in which he lashes the "Jupiter-Jeames" of the *Times* for its severe comment upon the story when published. This inability to conceal his chagrin under such assaults was THACKERAY's weakness. But it was a fleeting emotion, for the great novelist was a great boy in his ardor and generosity; and his thoroughly affectionate nature is characteristically shown in his Christmas song of "The Mahogany Tree," with its strange blending of sadness and gayety—the tone of a wiser Horace.

In these expressions of the holiday feeling of the last generation we find the voice of the Christmas sentiment of to-day; and if we push back two centuries and a half, SHAKESPEARE's familiar and beautiful allusion to the season shows how unchanged the feeling is. Nature is made to sympathize with the glad and peaceful spirit of the time. The bird of dawning singeth all night long, and all is healthful and serene. So, in MILTON's hymn, Apollo leaves with hollow shriek the shrine of Delphos, and the descriptive strain steals in—a breath of flutes and soft recorders:

> "From haunted spring and dale,
> Edged with poplar pale,
> The parting genius is with sighing sent."

MRS. BARRETT BROWNING recalls the same legend in "Great Pan is dead." And who in the Christmas of to-day does not feel the reason of the legend, and perceive that sympathetic consciousness of the landscape with the happy festival?

> "Ah, lady, we receive but what we give,
> And in our life alone does nature live."

How perfectly the good feeling of the Christmas season is symbolized by the good cheer of the day! Nobody shall go hungry and thirsty. The parents shall sit by the blazing hearth and drink a health, while the children kiss under the mistletoe. In hospitals of the sick and in prisons of criminals, as well as in the squalid homes of the extreme poor, one day in the year shall bring a sense of universal brotherhood, of a common humanity. And what an interchange of gifts, which shall be valued, not by the cost, but by the impulse and the motive! No saint in all the calendar, not even Saint Valentine, shall be so widely and so warmly worshipped as Santa Claus. And behold! after dinner all the old are young again, and circling in "Oats, peas, beans, and barley grows," and sprawling in Hunt the Slipper, and shouting in Blindman's-buff, and guessing in Dumb Crambo, and dancing and slipping and tumbling in a merry tumult of many games, youth once more reigns supreme. In the holiday games, also, the old Christmas survives. WORDSWORTH salutes ancient manners as the sure defense of wholesome laws, and there is certainly a pleasant conservatism in the persistence of old customs, and in none more than in Christmas observances. The misfortune is that they must be sincere or they have no value; and however significant or picturesque or desirable, they can not be artificially preserved. Pifferari and waits, like the Lord of Misrule and Maid Marian and Hobby Horse, vanish before different times and a changing spirit of the age. But the sentiment from which they sprang survives. They are the old black-letter type, which is outgrown, but not so the wisdom which it expressed. The wassail remains, although it is no longer a bowl of spiced ale. The horseplay of a rude age and taste has given place to quiet games, as the practical jokes which Miss BURNEY describes would be merely stupid and vulgar now. Our pifferari play in the bright drawing-room, not in the dim street. Our waits sing in choir and gallery, not in the snow upon the lawn. Our morning carols are the happy shouts of children before the dawn, feeling the stuffed stocking and blessing Santa Claus.

PERUGINO'S MADONNA.

BY EDWIN ARNOLD.

OUT of all the hundred fair Madonnas
Seen in many a rich and distant city—
Sweet Madonnas, with the mother's bosoms,
Sad Madonnas, with the eyes of anguish,
Rapt Madonnas, caught in clouds to heaven,
(Clouds of golden, glad, adoring angels)—
She of Florence, in the chair, so perfect!
She that was the "Grand-duke's" wealth and glory;
She that makes the picture "of the goldfinch";
Ghirlandaio's, with the cloak and jewels;
Guido's queen, whom men and angels worship;
Della Robbia's best; and that sweet Perla—
Seville's bright boast—Mary of Murillo
(Painted—so they vow—"with milk and roses");
Guido Reni's *quadro* at Bologna;
Munich's masterpiece, grim Dürer's goddess;
Yea! and thy brave work—Beltraffio mio!—
Many as the lessons are I owe them,
Thanks and wonder, worship, grateful memories,
Oftenest I shall think of Perugino's.

Do you know it? Either side a triptych
Stands an armed archangel—as to guard her—
Glorious, with great wings and shining armor;
In the middle panel, pure and tender,
Clasping close her hands with adoration
(All the Mother's love—the Mortals' worship
In their yearning, in their reverence, painted),
Gazes Mary on the Child. A seraph
Holds Him, smiling, at her knees; and, smiling,
Looks she down, with spirit humble, happy,
Full—to heart's brim—of the peace of Heaven.
Reverence mingles with the mother's passion,
But no touch of sadness, or of doubting.
Far away a River runneth seaward
(Little now—like Truth, like Truth—to widen),
Leads the light across a dim blue country,
Under peaks—by forests—to the ocean.
Soft and warm, a pearly sky broods over
Where three Winged Ones, at the Father's footstool,
Sing the "peace and good-will" song to mortals.

If you ask me why that Perugino
Of the rest can never be forgotten,
Let this serve: I learned a lesson by it,
Watching one whose light and faithful fingers—
Following touch by touch the lovely labor—
Caught the Master's trick and made him modern.
While she bent above her new Madonna,
Laid the splendid smalts, and toned the crimsons,
Swept the shadows under the gilt tresses,
Smoothed the sinless brows, and drooped the eyelids,
What the Master did, so also doing,
I bethought me, "True and good the toil is!
Noble thus to double gifts of beauty!
Yet, alas! this 'peace and good-will' anthem,
If the dear Madonna knew what ages—
Slowly following ages—would creep o'er us,
And those words be still, as wind which passes,
Breathing fragrance from a land we know not,
Sighing music to a tune we catch not,
Stirring hearts, as leaves, i' the night a little
Shake and sleep again, and wait for sunlight
(Sweet, glad sunlight! oh, so long a-coming!),
Would she smile so? I had painted rather
While she listened to those singing Angels,
Mary, with a sword-blade in her bosom
(Sword that was to pierce her heart, of all hearts!),
I had shown her with deep looks of trouble,
Half afraid to credit that Evangel;
I had limned her 'pondering all those sayings,'
All these sorrows of her world foreseeing,
After all these years have heard 'the tidings.'"

But the Artist, painting bold and largely,
Washing soft and clear the broadening colors,
With a liberal brush at skillful working,
Linking lights and shadows on the visage,
Dropped by hazard there one drop of water!
"Lo, a tear!" I thought. "That teaches Pietro!
That is wiser than the Master's wisdom!
Now the picture's meaning will be perfect!
For she could not be so calm—Christ's Mother—
Could she? even though archangels kept her!
Could she? even though those sang in Heaven!
Knowing how her world would roll beyond them,
Twenty centuries past this sacred moment,
Out of sound of this angelic singing;
Loaded with the wrongs Christ's justice rights not,
Reddened with the gore Christ's teachings stanch not,
Reeking with the tears Christ's pity stays not.
Let the tear shine there! it suits the story!
Tear and smile go wondrous well together!
Seeing that this song was sung by Angels;
Seeing that the foolish world gainsays it.
That one lustrous drop completes the picture!
You forgot it! Peter of Perugia!"

Ah! I did not know an Artist's wisdom!
I had still to learn my deepest lesson!
She I watched, with better thought inspired,
Took some tender color in her pencil,
Faint dawn-color—blush of rose—I marked not!
Touched the tear, and melted it to brightness,
Spread it in a heavenly smile all over,
Magically made it turn to service,
Till that tear, charged with its rosy tintings,
Deepened the old smile and left it lovelier—
Like the Master's work, complete, sufficient!

Then I thought: "Pietro's wise Madonna
Was too wise to weep at little sorrows!—
Christ, and She, and Heaven, and all the Angels
Last: 'tis sin and grief alone which passes!
Roses grow of dew, and smiles from weeping!
Sweetest smile is made of saddest tear-drop!
She hath not forgotten we shall suffer!
In her heart that sword—to the heft—is planted!
But beyond the years she sees Time over!
Past the Calvary she counts 'the mansions.'
Dear Madonna! wise to be so happy!
Should you weep, because we have not listened?
We shall listen! and His Mother knows it!"

This is why, of many rare Madonnas,
Most of all I think on Perugino's—
I who know so many more and love them!
This is why I thank my gentle Artist,
She who taught me that, a Student's wisdom!

WHY WE SPENT LAST CHRISTMAS IN TOWN.

BY MRS. FRANK McCARTHY.

I WAS exceedingly glad when my mother declared that the weather was not propitious for a call. The wind was blowing a hurricane, and whistled dolefully through the skeleton branches of the gaunt old poplars that formed what my father called "the avenue to our ancestral home." Heavy clouds hung portentously over the house that my father had also chosen to call "Upton Manor," and, as I said before, I was glad when my mother declared the proposed visit postponed.

I might have known, however, that nothing in the weather short of a cyclone could deter my father from pursuing the purpose he had in view.

I told Jim Howe, our head man about the place, not to have the horses brought out; but he whispered me behind his horny hand that "the Senator had already ordered 'em around to the south porch."

"The women-folks can stay at home, Jack," said my father; "but you and I are neither sugar nor salt, and will pursue our way. I have a particular desire that you shall be presented to your old playmate as soon as possible, now that her father has brought her home. I have told my friend Peter many a time that he could educate his daughter here just as well as he could abroad, but those Dutch obstinacies of his will have their way. I have not seen Catharine Van Dorn since she was a bit of a girl, nor has my friend Peter for many years had a chance to measure the capabilities of my son and heir. The first impression is everything, and I want you to put your best foot forward on this occasion, for reasons which I will afterward explain."

My father, or Senator Upton, as he was usually called, walked to and fro, his hands under his coat tails, his heavy boots clanging on the faded tiles of the old dining-hall. He had only been a State Senator, and the tenure of his office had expired; but the title clung to him, as titles sometimes will, among our kindly American people, when their expediency has passed away. If my father could have been induced to give the serious attention to his apparel that he did to some other things, his figure would have been an imposing one, but his tall, spare, and loosely jointed form was always caricatured by the garments he threw upon it.

His head, however, was a fine one, and bore its sixty-five years uncommonly well. The keen dark eyes held considerable of their old fire, and the high nose seemed yet to snuff the battle from afar.

I was about twenty-three that eventful day in November, and people who were capable of forming an opinion said that I was the fac-simile of what my father had been at my time of life.

I thrummed upon the oaken table where I had seated myself, and followed the approaching and retreating form of my father with an uneasy eye.

"The forest road," I remarked, "will be rather a dangerous one this morning."

"If you are afraid of accidents," said my father, "we can take a deetoor" (he invariably pronounced everything from his native stand-point) "by the main road."

The glint in his eye spurred me to a frank avowal.

"The fact is," I said, "I would rather not make that call this morning. I wanted to go in another direction."

"Have you any objections," he said, pausing in his walk, "to my knowing in what direction your inclinations lie?"

"None whatever," I said, resolving to plunge ahead now, whatever came of it. "I thought of calling upon Miss Pettingill this morning. Her father, the Major—"

"Pah!" ejaculated my father; "don't call that man Major in my presence. It's my belief he has no more right to the title than that cockatoo."

Oddly enough, my mother's dilapidated bird held a certain resemblance to the Major. Its expressionless eyes, its hooked nose, its draggled plumage, the staggering uncertainty with which it endeavored to hold its own upon the perch—all these were strongly suggestive of the Major; but as far as the title was concerned, the Major had probably as much right to it as my father had to his own.

Unfortunately there had been a growing antipathy between the men for years.

"It doesn't matter in the least to me," I said. "I'm not interested in the subject."

A gleam of light shot athwart the lowering face of my father, and seating himself at the table, he looked almost pleadingly into my eyes.

"I am glad to hear you say that, my boy," he said. "I might have known you were not particularly interested in these Pettingills."

"I said I was not interested in titulary discussion," I replied, but with a certain quaking about my heart, for I saw the tempest gathering in his face, and my love for my father was not of that perfect character that casteth out fear.

The fact was, I was not desirous of precipitating matters with my father just yet. That I loved Miss Pettingill, that I was prepared to do battle for that love—if need be, to die for it—had been a foregone conclusion with me for a half-year, that might have been a century so far as earnestness of purpose went. The whole country thereabouts must have known of my idolatry; my mother, my little sisters, the stable-boy, Jim Howe—every one must have been perfectly well aware that I was in love with Miss Pettingill. It was natural to suppose that my father must also have known of it. The old gentleman was as keen in his perceptions, as wide-awake to everything that was going on around him, as any one of them all, but had chosen, for reasons which I had hitherto been unable to fathom, to ignore the subject. His motives now began to be apparent.

Old Peter Van Dorn, of the neighboring estate, had come back from Europe, where he had been sojourning the last five years, and had brought with him his daughter Catharine. The fine old mansion had been renovated and modernized, and the Van Dorns had already begun to accommodate themselves to their new surroundings. I was not interested in the matter any more than I was with titulary discussion, or with any matter that did not directly concern Miss Pettingill. I had a faint remembrance of a little girl that had always come to our house for the Christmas holidays, and wore ribbons long enough to her sash strings to make into horse reins. I was told she had no little sisters to play with, as I had, which seemed to me then—for I was a greedy boy—a very good thing. I remembered standing under the mistletoe with her in the same old dining-hall where my father and I were at that moment, and eating bonbons at the same table, and the whole retrospection might have been pleasant enough had not my father brought it about in so disagreeable a way. I could readily understand how my father and Peter Van Dorn, pouring out their old wine at the sideboard together, and hobnobbing in the old Christmas way, had cast many an approving and hopeful glance upon the two youngsters under the mistletoe. There must have been something very appropriate and touching in that spectacle, fit to bring tears to the eyes of the convivial old comrades, and cause them to punch each other's ribs, and wink unctuously, and add their uproarious laughter to the Christmas tide about them.

The Van Dorn estate was not, perhaps, so vast and valuable as the Uptons', but there was only the one child to inherit it all; and the properties joined. The two estates together might easily form a county of their own. One could readily see how alluring all this was to my father, to Peter Van Dorn, to any one that was not lifted above all these sordid matters by the heroic crucible of love.

Now that I divined the plan of my father, and how it had been ripening all these years, I felt sorrier for him than I can say. He was old; he was set in his ways; he had formed his convictions long ago; it was not worth while to try and change them now. I felt that I could not even explain to him the nature of my love for Miss Pettingill: he would not understand it. There was only one thing for me to do: to confess that love and to stand by it, remembering always it was not a theme for abuse and wrangling. I would rather have waited until I had secured the sanction of Miss Pettingill to this public avowal. If she could have pinned her colors to my sleeve, and sent me forth to the combat as her acknowledged champion, I would have been eager for the fray; but she had in her enchantingly elusive way forbidden me to talk over our affairs with anybody, and her word to me was law.

"There is one thing," said my father, "that you *must* be interested in, unless you have a heart of stone and the blood of a fish, and that is the family estate. My labors in its behalf have been Herculean—yes, Herculean," he said, bringing his hand down with a bang upon the oaken table that set the glasses and decanters jingling on the sideboard, and making my mother's cap strings flutter as she passed hurriedly through the room, and cast a timid glance of pity, of terror, of boundless love and sympathy, upon the devoted head of her poor boy Jack.

"When I found," continued my father, "that the railroad had become of inestimable value to my constituents, I worked early and late to secure its success. I passed sleepless nights and wearisome days. I traversed this country when it was almost impassable, and brought influences to bear upon the legislative bodies of this State that a mind like yours fails to appreciate or understand."

"You do me great injustice, sir," I said; but my father's tone had already softened, and his eyes had begun to yearn over me as my mother's had yearned, but in an entirely different way. There was something more than love there, a hot pride, a fierce ambition, an impatience with frustration, and withal, the anguish that besets the soul of a man when he finds that the work of a lifetime may be all in vain.

"Because you are as yet only a boy," said my father, taking up the thread of his argument, as it had doubtless been his legislative habit to do when he determined to hold his hearers to the point in question; but there was an earnestness in his voice now, a sincerity, a pathos, that would long ago have carried his auditors by storm, and now compelled his son to a respectful silence. "It has been no easy matter, my son, for me to put by a suitable portion for your sisters, and yet hold every acre that came to me from your grandfather, every acre that formed a part of the ancestral estate, to keep this vast property whole and unbroken, to be handed down to you, as it has been handed down to me, as I pray God you may hand it down to your eldest son, as the proper representative of an ancient name."

My father paused, and I knew perfectly well what seemed demanded of me, and as Heaven is my judge I endeavored as best I could to meet the exigencies of the occasion. I couldn't round out words as he could, nor was it possible for me to veil a certain meaning in an ambiguous way. Nobody regretted this deficiency more than I did, and it was certainly more my misfortune than my fault. I appreciated all that he had done, and I tried to tell him so.

"It must have been terribly up-hill work, sir," I said. "I don't see how you managed to get that bill through and arrange it so that the railroad ran through our property, and then sell off all that swamp down there so."

I stopped here, for I saw that I was making a mess of it, as I generally did.

"Go on," said my father, with a sardonic grin, and a dilatation of the nostrils that was very unpleasant to see—"go on; don't let any sentiments of filial respect restrain you from expressing a candid opinion. You were remarking that I got the bill through so that I could influence the management of the road, and sell off my contiguous property advantageously. I've heard this argument advanced before; but it's always interesting to hear any new views upon the subject. Go on, I pray you."

"See here, father," I said, noting that his eyeballs were actually getting red; "I don't care a hang for the bill, or the road, or the swamp, or anything. I'm sorry you've gone to all this trouble because I happened to be the only son; all that sort of thing is happily done away with in this country, and I am perfectly content to come in with my sisters, share and share alike, in everything."

Here I paused again, for it appeared to me I could light the blackened stump of my half-smoked cigar at any portion of my father's face.

"Of course!" he gasped. "It would doubtless be a delight to you before I was cold in my grave to put the old place up at auction, rattle the bones of your ancestors down there in the corner plot to a more convenient locality, or dump them in the river, for that matter, get all the hard cash you could for the land that has been in the family for hundreds of years, divide the proceeds, and send every accursed Upton of you all to obscurity and nothingness, because of the infernal obstinacy and malevolence of one who might hold the prosperity of himself and his race in the hollow of his hand. Perhaps the lady in whom you are so particularly interested don't like the country? It may be she is nurturing the hope that your share of the proceeds may set her up in town some day."

"If you mean Miss Marie Pettingill—" I said. But my father broke in with a discordant laugh.

"Maree!" he repeated. "Why under heaven don't you call the woman by her right name? It's Maria!—Maria Pettingill! Maree! Pah! I ought to know her name. She's been in this neighborhood now off and on for thirty-eight years. She's an old fowler, and has snared many a bird. Yes, indeed, sir, I can prove it: she's thirty-eight if she's a day."

I arose to my feet trembling in every limb. "If she's a hundred, sir," I said, "I love her. I love her, and I will make her my wife."

"I don't know about that," said my father, also getting upon his feet. "I don't believe you can make Maria Pettingill do anything that is unprofitable, and, as God is my witness, if you *do* marry her, I'll cut you off, root and branch! You'll never get a rood of the Upton property nor a dollar of the Upton cash. Go to Maria Pettingill, tell her to put that in her pipe and smoke it, or her cigar, for she *does* smoke. Yes, sir, she smokes like a Turk. I've seen her."

And my father strode away. If he had not been an old man and my father, I'd have caught him where he stood and strangled the words in his throat. As it was, I was all unstrung. Not that I minded what he had said, save for his own sake and that of the woman I loved. But how could I go to her fresh from such pollution as this? The old dining-hall was vast and high, and the north wind swept through it like a hurricane, but I was stifling.

Seizing a fowling-piece that hung upon the wall, I caught up an old top-coat that hung there too, and pushing down upon my ears a shooting cap, and stuffing some ammunition for my heavy old weapon in my pockets, I plunged into the foot-path that led along the high bank of the river.

Once out in the open air, all that mildew there within, all that choking oppression, that cowardly doubt and clogging fear, fled like the vapors of the morning. What if my father did cut me off? what if he flung me upon the world without help or support? I ought to have been there long ago, making my way like a man. Surely the woman I loved would only think the more of me? Was not everything the sweeter if won with a struggle? Did not my love for her only burn the fiercer because of the obstacles an unreasonable old man chose to throw in its way?

But her love for me?

What was this miserable doubt that again began to tug at my heart-strings?

It was not because of my father, or of aught he could say or do. Alas! it was because of the woman I loved.

And all unconsciously I was rapidly making my way to the one magnet of my existence. I had started out ostensibly for game, but the only game I coveted lay in the direction of the somewhat pretentious pile of architecture known as Riverside Villa, a pinchbeck sort of structure, built by Major Pettingill upon some valuable property he had bought from my father. It was currently reported that my father held a heavy mortgage upon the whole concern; and as I reached the open road, and saw the Senator's horse hitched to a sickly sapling before the Pettingill portal, my heart was in my mouth, for I knew the desperate mood of my father involved desperate deeds.

Had he, then, gone straightway to the innocent victims of his most unreasonable rage, and poured out the vials of his wrath upon their devoted heads? Had the sword of Damocles, in the shape of that dreadful mortgage, at last descended upon the poor Major? And by a certain irony of fate, the very means the poor man had taken to avert the disaster had only hastened his doom. The Major had made his house pleasant to the son of his enemy, he had deprecated the differences in the political and social views of the Uptons and the Pettingills, he had sat for hours and tried to explain certain points of dispute, and would doubtless have succeeded in convincing the poor wight to whom he addressed his argument, if the bewildered man had heard half that he said; but there had entered the room and remained there such a paragon of beauty and grace as dazzled him and blinded him to everything but her lustrous eyes, her neck of snow, her shining hair, and her red lips, from whence came once in a while a word or two of such exquisite melody that the Major's voice was like the croak of a frog disturbing the enchanting notes of the nightingale.

But the Major, finding me thus enchanted, had taken infinite pains to secure some moments for the discussion of mundane matters when the enchantress was otherwise engaged; so that I knew all about the political differences of my father and the Major, and learned sufficiently of that direful mortgage to know that it was the bane of the Major's life, and the discussion upon this matter just now must bring discord and misery to all concerned.

But as I came nearer to the villa, who should I see walking among the stiff parterres but the Major himself? He looked more like my mother's cockatoo than ever—more blear-eyed and puffed and draggled; but where was Marie? Alone with my father? Had he dared, then, to go to a defenseless woman and make war upon her? But no; the ex-Senator had come out upon the door-step, and was drawing his great-coat about him. His face certainly wore a look of great peace and tranquillity—even of joy.

He shook hands cordially with the Major, who had tottered up the steps to meet him, and now bent his long, loosely jointed frame over something. Yes, it was a white hand that was extended to him from within. I bounded to the gate, and was just in time to catch a passing wave of the hand and a triumphant glance from my father as he rode away.

That fleeting, victorious glance was all I had to remember him by for many a day. And it was sadly near, haunting and mocking me to the confines of mortality. The joy in my father's face was not calculated to inspire joy in return. It was a grim and sinister contraction of the muscles that made me very uneasy, for it spoke of an ill-gotten gain. Paying no heed to the Major's cordial salutation, I rushed within, and tearing aside the flimsy curtain Miss Pettingill called a *portière*, and entering the apartment Miss Pettingill always chose to keep in semi-darkness, I flung myself at her feet in a transport of hope and fear, of agonizing love, of doubt and impending despair. I clasped the white hand my father had so lately held in his own, and pressed it close to a heart that the Major might have heard beating out upon the porch. A hundred fierce, powerful, poetic, irresistible words struggled for deliverance, and I could scarcely give birth to one.

"Remember, Marie," I stammered—"remember that I do not belong to my father; I belong to you."

"But the estate belongs to your father," said the lady of my love; and looking up in her face, I saw something there that snuffed me out like the flame of a candle.

It was neither grief, nor rage, nor injured pride, nor hurt dignity. It was a calm, cold irrevocability that, like death, admitted of no appeal.

The cold pith of her argument struck a chill to the heat of my passion, and getting up from my knees, I said, in tones as icy as her own, "I did not come here to talk of the Upton estate, but of my own individual claims."

"It is impossible to separate the one from the other," said Miss Pettingill. "You'll probably find a great many people who will pretend to do so, for a nature like yours is a premium to deceit and false dealing; but I for one will be a party to no such trickery. The thought of marriage with you has never for one moment entered my head. I knew it was impossible from the first. Your father had other views for you which were more suitable in every way. But you were a pleasant companion, and the foolish fancy a young man sometimes conceives for a woman of the world is always more or less of an education to him, if not unwisely prolonged. It would be injurious to both of us longer to continue an intimacy which, I confess, has been very agreeable to me, and, as I just told your father, we have concluded, papa and I, to go abroad for the winter."

"Did you tell me," I said, "that the thought of marriage with me had never entered your head?"

"Why, my dear boy," she replied, "how was it possible? While your father lives he owns the estate, and I am too old to wait for the new *régime*."

"Yes," I said, "my father tells me you are thirty-eight years old; that you are an old fowler, and have snared many a bird."

Heaven knows what led me to this brutality, unless it was that she had reduced me to the condition of saying anything that entered my head.

"Your father is somewhat extravagant in his remarks," she said, "but they are founded on facts."

She had grown very pale, and she was always very beautiful. I would have thrown myself again at her feet, but I knew it would be useless.

"You'll never forgive me now," I said, "but you may as well know that I told my father if you were a hundred, that I loved you, and I would make you my wife. He said that I couldn't make you do anything so unprofitable, and it appears he was right; but what puzzles me is the motive you could have had for leading me on."

Just then a shadow passed the window, and like a silhouette on the shade were the high shoulders of the Major, his hooked nose, and one of his bulgy eyes. There seemed to me a peculiar lilt in his gait that spoke of an easy mind; and as I never could see the Major without connecting him somehow with the mortgage, a correlative conclusion leaped to my brain. As I sprang to my feet, and lifted the fowling-piece from the corner where I had thrown it, Miss Pettingill put up her hands and faltered out some sort of an entreaty. I suppose she thought her last moment had come, but I was only intent upon finding out something from the Major.

I went out upon the balcony and caught the old beggar unawares.

"You made a pretty good bargain with my father this morning, didn't you?" I said.

"Hum—a—yes," stammered the Major, falling back a little, and, like his daughter, finding something unpleasant about my handling of the gun. "Your father was very liberal—very liberal indeed."

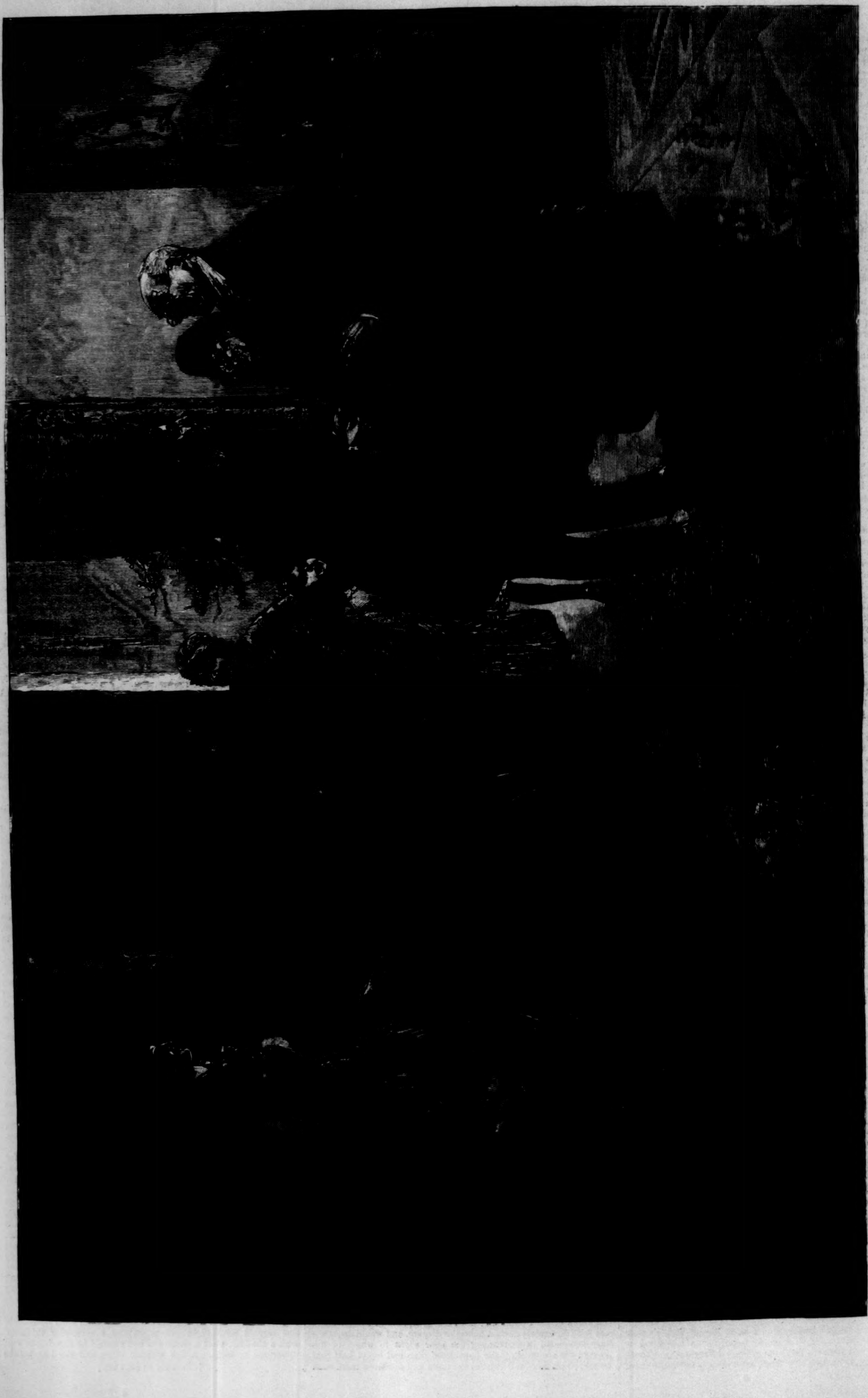
Then the scales fell from my eyes, and my love for that woman died upon the spot; but nevertheless I was a most miserable man. It is not always the Judas that goes out and hangs himself.

I plunged into the forest path again, and went on and on for miles, like a wounded animal, seeking some place safe from prying eyes. And suddenly the devil, who doubtless lies in wait for souls pushed to the extremity of mine, tempted me to make away with myself altogether, and put an end to everything with a charge of ammunition in my rusty old gun. Mad with grief and rage, stung to the quick with the cruel wrong I had endured at the hands of those I loved best in the world, I suffered a thousand deaths, and was only anxious to find one that would bring me the final pang. I was in the act of ramming down the deadly charge, and all the darkest passions within me were at their fullest tide, when there fell upon my ears a trampling through the underbrush, and suddenly the nose of a horse was at my shoulder, and a fresh young voice cried out, tremblingly,

"Oh, please tell me the way out of this dreadful wood?"

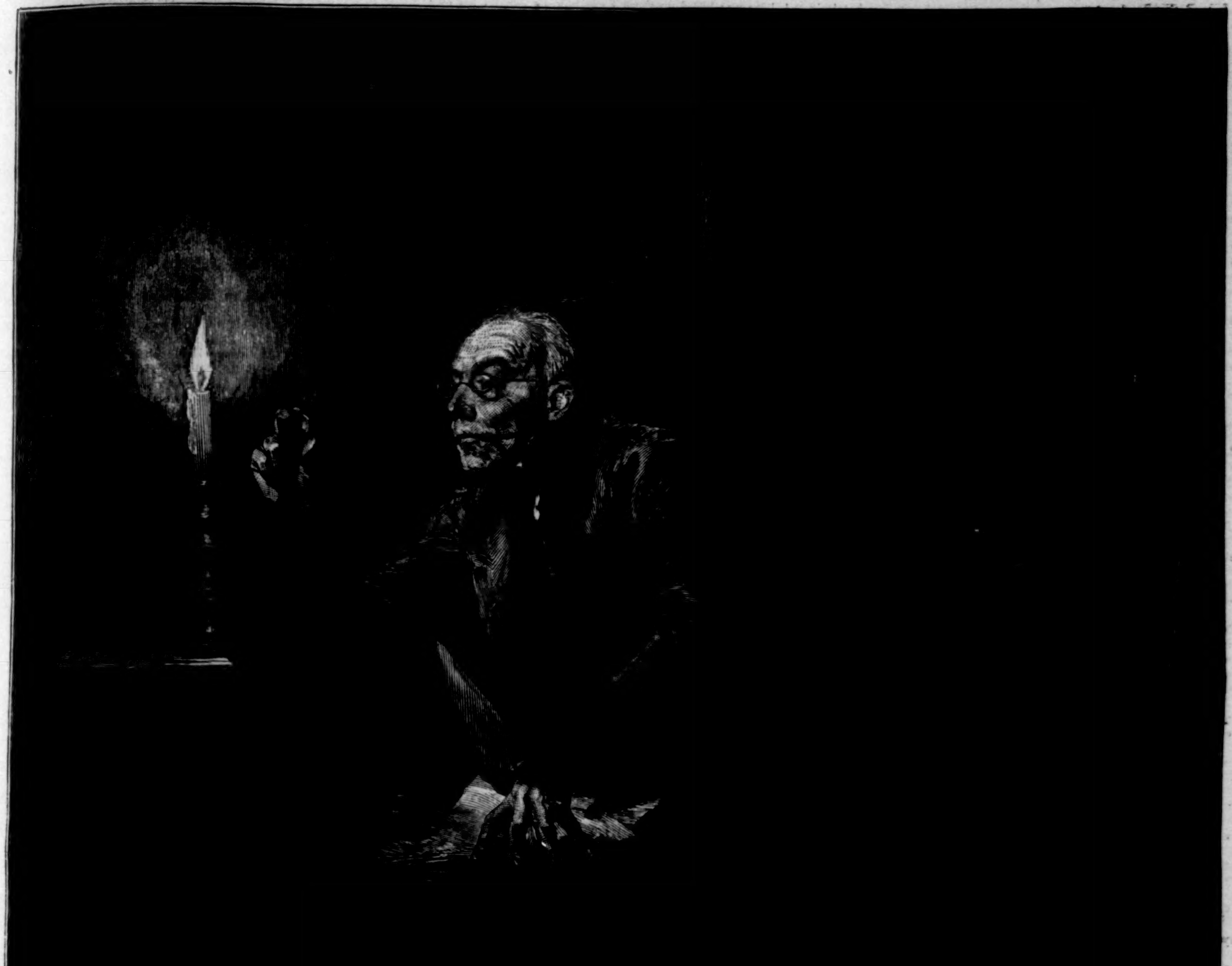
Turning, I beheld what appeared to me a child upon horseback. She seemed scarcely in her teens, and I remember thinking, with a shudder, what a shock she had escaped by arriving at that opportune moment. A few seconds more, and she had beheld

[*Continued on page 824.*]



WHY WE SPENT LAST CHRISTMAS IN TOWN.—"I FLEW DOWN TO WELCOME THEM."

Drawn by W. T. Smedley.



MR. MERRIDEW'S GOLD PIECE.—"HE SEIZED AND HELD THE TREASURE NEAR THE LIGHT."

DRAWN BY HOWARD PYLE.

[*Continued from page* 821.]

WHY WE SPENT LAST CHRISTMAS IN TOWN.

there a sight that would have turned the young blood to ice in her veins. And alone, in the heart of the wood, what would the poor child have done?

She was still looking upon me, half affrighted, shrinking back upon her horse, the reins gathered firmly in her hands, her blue eyes opened wide, her lips apart, and her yellow hair tumbling from under the cap that fell back upon her shoulders.

I dropped the murderous weapon in the underbrush, and put my hand upon the bridle of her horse, which instinctively knew I was a lover of his kind.

"Don't be frightened," I said. "I will lead you to the path;" and I was astonished to hear my own voice once more, so sure had I been of my own demise. "It will take you straight to the main road; and let me say to you, the path is difficult to find, and hard to follow, and you do a very dangerous thing to ride through these woods alone."

"Why," she replied, "I used to know every step of the way when I was a child."

"And what are you now, pray?" I asked, still wondering to find myself alive and at the bridle-rein of this fair young stranger.

"I am past eighteen," she said. "I have been away from home for five years, and I'm so glad to get back again; so is papa, though he pretends he loves the old country best. I don't—I hate it. I love my old home. Why, part of this big wood belongs to me. I ought to be able to ride about in my own woods; it's only because I've been away so long, and forgotten the path. I remember it now. There's a big rock just ahead, isn't there?—almost a little mountain. Yes, yes, I know it now; you need not come any further. Thank you ever so much. I'm so glad I came across you!"

"So am I," I exclaimed, earnestly; and suddenly she bent forward, and put her little gloved hand on my shoulder.

"I beg your pardon, sir," she said, and, looking up, I beheld such a sweet compassion in her face, such a warmth of womanly pity, as made me to know she had divined the nature of the dark deed she had stumbled upon back there in the heart of the wood—"I beg your pardon, sir, but it seemed to me when I first saw you that you were suffering—that you were in pain and misery."

"I was in great pain and misery," I said.

"And—and you are better now?"

"Very much better, thank you."

"And you won't go back in that dreadful wood again? It is so cold and dark in there, and so much better out here in the sunshine! You won't go back, will you?"

"I think not."

"Do you live about here? Are your home and your people—"

"I have no home and no people." God forgive me, but I really felt all that I said.

"I am so sorry for you! I wish I could help you."

"You have saved my life; but it was scarcely worth the saving."

"Oh, don't say that. Any life is worth the saving."

We were now at the forest road. I saw our head man Jim Howe driving down with a load of logs, and stepped back in the shadow of the wood.

"You are not going back again?" said the compassionate young creature.

"No, no; I will not go back," I said. "I promise you I will not go back, and I will do the best I can."

"I wish I could help you," she said, wistfully; and with many a backward glance, fraught with tenderest charity, she rode away. I watched her out of sight, and seeing that she had stopped to speak with Jim Howe, I suddenly resolved to speak to him too.

He reined up his horses when he saw me, and I beckoned him within the wood. I could trust Jim Howe. I had made him an ambassador with many of my secret messages to Miss Pettingill. I suppose he thought it was for some such purpose I wanted him now.

"Who is that young lady, Jim?" I asked. "The young lady on horseback who spoke to you just now."

"Why, Master Jack, that's Miss Catharine Van Dorn. I don't wonder you didn't know her. She's that growed since she went to furren parts, nobody'd know her. She's a stunner, ain't she? Some folks has a leanin' to dark women, I know, but there's somethin' about a clean white skin and yaller hair that gits me. I'm glad I happened on her just as I did, for there's such a dickens of a wind I don't think I'll go back to the clearin' to-day, and I wanted to let the old gentleman, Van Dorn, know that he couldn't depend on my brother George to boss that job out there. You see, he wanted a man to oversee that clearin' business out there, and I wrote to my brother George about it; but he's been livin' down South, and it's comin' on cold weather; and my brother George he's a family man, and he couldn't see his way clear to come. So I told Miss Catharine to tell her father to look out for some one else."

I held on to the sleeve of Jim Howe's jacket for a while, plunged in a labyrinth of thought.

"See here, Jim," I said at length; "you can keep a secret, can't you?"

"I should think you ought to know," said Jim, reproachfully.

"So I do, Jim; and I'm going to trust you now with a matter of life and death to me. For reasons of my own I want to keep in hiding for a while. I don't want anybody to know where I am, or whether I am alive or dead. This clearing is up at the far end of the Van Dorn property, isn't it?"

"About seven miles the other side of the cedar swamp, Master Jack."

"And it is a wild, unfrequented, lonely place, isn't it?"

"You bet it is. A bear was killed up there last winter; that's the reason my brother George—"

"Talking of your brother George, Jim, do I look anything like him?"

Jim looked at me critically, and shook his head. "Well, no, Master Jack; I can't say as you do. He worked in a quarry some years ago, and a bit of the stone it lodged in his eye, and made a sockdolager of it, and sleepin' in the sheds give him the rheumatiz; and what with fever 'n' ager, and one thing 'n' another, and bein' in the wind and rain, his complexion ain't like strawberries and cream—no, I can't say, Master Jack, as there's a lively resemblance atween you and my brother George."

"Nevertheless, Jim, I want you to remember that I'm your brother George. I've reconsidered that matter about the clearing, and I've come North to take charge of it. You met me at the railway station, and will take me back with you to-day, and I want to begin my new duties at once."

Jim began to shake his head, but I overruled all his objections; and about an hour afterward Jim brought back his empty wagon, a stout pilot jacket, a pair of heavy top-boots, a liberal supply of bread and meat (for by this time I was as hungry as a hunter), and that night I was installed as overseer of a squad of raw Dutchmen at the clearing.

A little careful consideration of the mood I was in and the position in which I found myself, after my extinguishment by one woman and resurrection by another, will explain something of the nature of my determination to get rid of myself for a while, and live as somebody else. I not only desired to get rid of myself but of my surroundings, and if I could have shipped upon a whaling expedition with the same celerity with which I became boss of a clearing, this story might never have been told. As far as isolation went, and change of scene and surroundings, I might as well have been driven to this wild range of country as a limitless waste of sea. Peter Van Dorn's estate joined that of my father as it extended into one of those untamed stretches of land which may yet be found in some of our Northern States, and there were many miles of it that the foot of man seldom trod. My father and Miss Pettingill had proved to me that I was of some little importance as the heir to the Upton estate, but apart from this I amounted to nothing whatever, and the estimation I had held of my own individual consequence had receive such a blow that I accepted the situation as they presented it to me, only I had enough manhood left to accept my nothingness such as it was in preference to tacking it on to so vast a thing as the Upton estate.

I couldn't bear to go home to my father, though to do him justice he would have hidden his triumph if he could, nor to my mother, for her pitying coddling would have fretted me to the soul, nor to my little sisters, and neighbors, and friends, for their pitiless gossip and foolish prattle would have driven me mad.

Not one of these understood me, but out there in the wilderness the Upton estate and I got to know each other well. How often in the sonorous soughing of the old pines I had listened to the earth song of Emerson!

> "Here is the land
> Shaggy with wood,
> With its old valley
> Wind and flood.
> But the heritors?
> Fled like the flood from
> The lawyer and the laws
> And the kingdom,
> Clean swept therefrom.
> They called me theirs
> Who so controlled me.
> Yet every one
> Wished to stay and is gone.
> How am I theirs
> If they can not hold me
> But I hold them?"

In the mean while, however, I was not the arbiter of my own destiny. Time went on, and my hirsute appendages were grown out of all reason. Jim's pilot-coat and heavy boots were not a perfect fit. I had not yet become hardened to the diet of salt meat, saleratus bread, and black coffee. My communings with nature had unfitted me somewhat for converse with my fellow-beings. I was as gaunt and shaggy and unkempt as my surroundings, and to all intents and purposes had endeavored to persuade myself that I was Jim's brother George. But man is not the master of himself.

Jim went on carting his logs, and brought me frequent news from home. My father had chosen to connect in his own mind my own disappearance with the departure of the Major and Miss Pettingill.

"It's my opinion," said Jim, "if the Senator don't stop workin' himself up about it, he'll bring on a fit of apoplexy or somethin'. He fairly foams at the mouth sometimes, and goes on like all possessed, and then agin he sits for hours starin' right straight ahead of him without speakin' a word; and mebbe you'll fetch him around if you hold out, and mebbe you won't; but this I'll make bold to say, that there ain't a woman on the face of the earth worth such a rumpus, and moreover there's as good fish in the sea as ever was caught, and for that matter a hanged sight better."

"If you betray me, Jim," I said, "I'll never forgive you. My father's rage can not reach me here."

"It ain't so much the rage, Master Jack, that's killin' the Senator; it's the wearin' uncertainty of it. I've seen the Senator almost wring his hands when he can't just make up his mind what has happened to you. He says to me only yesterday, says he, 'Jim, I'd almost rather have him dead than married to that woman; but, after all, Jim, he's my first-born and only son.'"

"You will be tempted to betray me, Jim."

"I've told you I wouldn't, and I won't," said Jim. "But if a man's got any bowels, I don't see how he can let his own father suffer that way, particularly when their ain't no manner o' use in it, unless you're still hankerin' after Miss Pettingill; and if that's the case, I'll make bold to say you ain't doin' the fair thing by a young woman that's comin' this way as fast as that mustang o' her's 'll carry her."

Yes, there she was, the fair young creature, with her yellow hair floating out upon the November wind. It was not that she was so beautiful, but there was such a wild, sweet freshness of youth about her, and innocence, and freedom from the world's guile. Whatever it was—Heaven help me!—the old fire and madness went leaping in my veins at the sight of her. I thought these things fell dead with my love for that woman, and was bewildered beyond thought to find them all in the full tide of a new idolatry.

She had galloped out there one day with her father, and I had endeavored not to meet her eyes, but there was a magnetism about her that was irresistible. Besides, did she not come to me like an angel of light in that dark moment of grief and rage and unutterable woe? Even in the first moments of my deliverance I shuddered to think of the crime I had escaped, and my heart went out in sudden gratitude to the instrument Providence had interposed in my behalf. To see her again was to rehearse all that I felt then, and more. And so my gratitude went on, and so her pity widened, and took depth and breadth, and pity is akin to love. How pliable is the human heart! How it can be wrung to bitterness and despair, and how it can be lifted to unspeakable joy and ecstasy!

But she was Catharine Van Dorn, and that meant the chains that my father and hers had forged for us in our helpless infancy.

In truth, I was not such an ass as to mind those things now. I was quite content to hug the chains that would bind me to the home of my ancestors, and yearned for the day that my poor old father could clasp me to his heart, and, in the full plenitude of his happiness, cry out, "Bless you, my children!"

But then I should cease to be Jim's brother George, and as Jim's brother George I had won the love of Catharine Van Dorn. Of course the child knew I had a hidden history, which began with her in the black shadow of the wood that day. She kept my secret bravely; but there it lay between us, and was the foundation of all.

And to watch the nucleus of pity and interest grow into something more; to see the flush in her cheeks widen to brow and chin, and then give way to a tremulous pallor; to watch the light in her eyes soften to tears, and hear the melody of her voice smile to the cadence of a sigh. And all these for Jim's brother George—not for the heir to the Upton estate. And scarcely for Jim's brother George: rather was it for a friendless wretch without home or name, or roof to shelter him save that of the shed out there in the clearing. Now this was love indeed, a love like mine; for had she been the daughter of a charcoal burner, I would have held her just as dear. This was a love that gave the lie to Miss Pettingill's sophistry, and one that my father and Peter Van Dorn had never dreamed of. Can you blame me for lingering thus inthralled, and hating to break the spell? But November days were done. The balmy haze of Indian summer had given place to biting blasts and flurries of snow, which were but the precursors to the long merciless winter that held this region in its iron hand for more than half the year.

Mr. Van Dorn had given me notice that our work there must soon be given over, but that he might find other employment for me. Poor old man! he little knew the mine I was digging under his feet. To do me justice, I meant to tell him on that very day I had the talk with Jim. I resolved to confess my identity to Mr. Van Dorn and ask for the hand of his daughter in marriage, and woe be to the daughter that would dare to gainsay so profitable an arrangement! Then the happy three of us would go to my father; and ho! for the fatted calf! and hurrah for the return of the prodigal! The wedding would come off at Christmas-time, and we would hold a right royal revelry over the event, as befitted its most excellent and happy surroundings.

But as she rode through the clearing that day, the vision of my future wife sitting upon her shaggy mustang there, her sweet face all aglow, her beautiful eyes seeking for me through the intervening branches of the pines—this vision so blinded me to all else for the moment that I forgot the big tree we had set blazing at the roots, in her very pathway. All at once it came crashing down, and had I not with a miraculous leap sprang to her and caught her from her saddle, and dashed back with her among the underbrush, she had probably been lost to us all within the minute.

"My trembling dove!" I cried, pressing her again and again to my heart, and kissing her hair, her lips, her hands; "there is nothing to fear. See, your pony has escaped. Fool and madman that I was to forget the tree! but I could remember nothing but you. My own sweet girl! Tell me, Catharine, that you are mine, forever and always."

"Forever and always!" repeated the innocent child; and scarcely had the sweet words escaped her lips when there came whizzing through the air the clean cut of a riding-whip, the long thin end of it touching lightly my own forehead, and leaving a red line upon that of the young creature in my arms; and looming above us was the gigantic form of Peter Van Dorn, his blue eyes almost bursting from under their bristling white brows, and his broad face one burning, livid red.

"Gott im Himmel!" he cried, tearing his daughter from my arms; "what does this mean?"

But it was impossible now to explain matters to him. The sting of a riding-whip is not calculated to aid in bringing forth words of peace and harmony, especially when it leaves a mark upon the sacred brow of a beloved one. Besides, the old man was naturally in a towering rage, and proceeded to express his opinion of a beggar—for aught he knew, a criminal—that would steal the affections of a child so that he could trade upon them for purposes of his own. He concluded by telling me to be gone out of his sight, lest he should murder me where I stood, and then strode away, with my poor girl lying senseless in his arms.

I stood looking after him, when somebody touched my sleeve, and I became aware that Jim Howe was a witness to all that had occurred.

"He must 'a heard that cussed tree," said Jim, "and seen the mustang go kiting off with the empty saddle; then, not knowin' nothing about anything, made everything look pretty rough. When he comes to find out who you are, he'll change his tune."

"Jim," I broke in, "I'm going to make Peter Van Dorn pay dear for that cut of his whip. From all you've told me I take it you're on pretty confidential terms with Betty, Miss Van Dorn's maid?"

With some little embarrassment Jim confessed that Betty and he understood each other pretty well; and after impressing upon Jim's mind the further necessity for secrecy, I confided to him my intention of eloping with Miss Van Dorn at the first opportunity that could be made.

Jim drew a puzzled sigh, and scratched his head. "If you'll tell me," he said, "what in the all-fired dickens is the use of runnin' away with a girl that everybody wants you to marry—"

"You'll find that out all in good time," I interposed.

"And about this 'ere Miss Pettingill?" questioned Jim.

"I give you my word of honor, Jim," I said, "that I have not seen or heard of Miss Pettingill since the day we came out here to the clearing. I don't know whether she's dead or alive, and I don't care."

"Then, as I understand it," said Jim, "you fell out of love with her that day, and into love with Miss Catharine?"

"Yes, Jim; you've stated the facts exactly."

"By jinks!" said Jim, "that was quick work."

So Jim took the place of ambassador to Miss Van Dorn, as he had in the old days to Miss Pettingill. He seemed to like the situation much better, and ceased all moralizing and questioning, devoting himself assiduously to the case in hand with a zeal that savored of a keen personal interest. Indeed, I know not how I should have succeeded in my reckless undertaking had not Jim persuaded Betty to prove her devotion to her young mistress by sharing her flight.

I must do my sweet girl the justice to explain here that I had much difficulty in inducing her to consent to a secret marriage, and only the fear that I would perhaps finish up the dread deed I had begun on the first day she saw me, and the trust she held in my protestations that I could subsequently procure her father's forgiveness, led her to consent to so desperate a measure.

As it was, she was almost in a fainting condition, and except for Betty would have given out at the last minute; but that sturdy young woman led her out of the house, and fairly took her in her arms and carried her to the coach I had in hiding. There she held her upon the opposite seat, coaxing and encouraging her, while I scarcely dared touch the hem of her garment, yet secretly exulting the while that she had done all this for pure love of me. In the mean while Jim, who had also burned his ships behind him, mounted the box, and we rode away in the dead of night to a distant railway station; from thence to town, where we were married without delay, and taken to the house of a friend of mine who had gone abroad that month, and not only left his place in town at my disposal, but the cash at his banker's.

It was a befitting casket for so precious a gem, furnished from top to bottom with a luxury that did not forbid comfort, and strewn about with knickknacks of *bijouterie* and art that would have delighted the heart of my sweet Catharine had she been in a condition to thoroughly delight in anything.

I would not give a fig for a woman who could throw over the love of so devoted a father as Peter Van Dorn, and so well could I afford to be generous that I had long since forgiven the cut of his whip, and was exceeding glad to see one morning in the columns of a daily paper an advertisement that ran thus: "If the rascal calling himself George Howe will call at the office of X. Y. Z., he will hear of something to his advantage." And immediately below this there ran another message to the fugitive, couched in the following terms, "Any information of my beloved son John Upton will be thankfully received by his unhappy father." Then followed his address at a well-known hotel.

This latter paragraph touched me to the heart. My poor father was then in town searching for his recreant son.

"Catharine," I said to my sweet wife, "I must arise and go to my father."

"And when shall I see my own dear papa?" she said, big tears falling out of her beautiful eyes upon my fine new waistcoat.

"On Christmas-day, darling," I said; "we'll all dine together on Christmas-day."

Then I went off upon my quest with triumphant glee.

The waiter at the hotel told me my father had been pacing to and fro in his room part of every night he had been in town, and my heart smote me when I saw the big furrows my misdoings had ploughed in his rugged face. Yet I could not forego the malicious surprise I held in reserve for him and old Peter Van Dorn.

"Come, my son," he said, when he had somewhat recovered from the first surprise and joy of our meeting—"come, let us shake the dust of this miserable city from our feet, and get home to Upton for Christmas-day."

"My dear father," I said, "I have a great favor to ask of you: it is to spend Christmas here with me in town. It is yet quite early in the day; you can go for my mother and sisters, and bring them back with you, so that they may reach my house in time for our Christmas dinner. It is a small house, to be sure, and will bear poor comparison with Upton Manor."

"Never mind that, my boy," said my father, "however poor and plain it may be, if happiness is there. But how—but why—" He paused, poor old man, and sighed heavily.

"I have also another favor to ask of you, father: it is to bring Mr. Peter Van Dorn with you. We all know what a sad calamity has come to him, but I have been fortunate enough to induce the villain who has run away with his daughter to bring her to my house on Christmas-day."

"How, sir," asked my father, sternly, "did it happen that you knew of this scoundrel?"

"He is a relation of my wife's," I said, meekly, "and is very sorry for what he has done, and will make what amends he can."

My poor father fell back against the gaudy dado upon the wall, and surveyed me with sorrowful eyes.

"Then you are really married, Jack?" he said.

"Yes, father."

"Jack," he said, and the veins in his forehead swelled nearly to bursting, "I have suffered much, and am willing to do all that I can to make it pleasant for us both; but there's a limit to everything, and what I can't and *won't* do is to eat my Christmas turkey—which means to me peace and good-will to men—with that trickster and lobbyist and liar, old Pettingill."

I assured my father that the Major would not be there. He promised he would send for his old friend Peter Van Dorn, and help him to bear whatever was in store for him, that he would bring my mother and sisters to the address I gave him in time for the Christmas dinner, and with many a smothered sigh and decidedly a rueful countenance, my father bade me good-by. Then I went home and prepared for a Christmas wassail with what restricted facility one can find in the heart of a town. My sweet Catharine went about aiding me with great vim and alacrity, now that I had promised her she should see her father on Christmas-day. My good man Jim and Catharine's good maid Betty, and the unlimited amount of cash my friend had put at my disposal, enabled us to place things on quite a comfortable Christmas footing.

As the Christmas bells rang out the hour of twelve, the long-looked-for cab rolled up to our door, and out came my father and mother, my little sisters, and old Peter Van Dorn.

Catharine grew so faint and weak that she halted at every step of the stair, but I flew down to welcome them, while Jim in his new livery, and Betty with her streaming ribbons, hastened to take what little luggage they had brought.

My father and mother could not take their eyes from the young creature faltering at the foot of the stairway; but no sooner had a big giant with stubby white beard and bushy white eyebrows caught sight of me than he seized me by the collar of my new broadcloth coat, and began shaking me to and fro.

Catharine screamed, and threw herself between us, and my father cried out, "Are you mad, Peter?—that is my son."

Then he loosened his hold of my collar, and Catharine and I, falling at their feet, confessed all.

Who can portray the scene that followed? In truth, it was so sweet and sacred, and revealed such a depth of human feeling, that I care not to describe it here.

There was not such a huge Christmas fire as would have blazed away at Upton, for the chimney-piece of my friend was a costly trifle, that would only burn cannel-coal. And the Christmas board did not groan under the weighty platters of Christmas viands and huge flagons of Christmas cheer. But there was an infinity of love and peace there that passed all understanding.

MR. MERRIDEW'S GOLD PIECE.

By VIRGINIA W. JOHNSON.

I.—ONLY AN OLD BANDBOX.

Mr. Merridew had a new idea. When Mr. Merridew had an idea the fact became apparent to all the subjects of his domestic kingdom, even to the house cat, as that brindled animal sat on the counter of the store in a moment of luxurious idleness. Not only did Mr. Merridew make mistakes in giving change, and stroke pussy's fur the wrong way, but he stared his family out of countenance while partaking of his supper.

"How do you like it, pa?" inquired Rosy, for he was tasting a custard pie of her own baking.

"Why, I think it would do very well indeed," he replied, briskly, and, if the truth be told, waving his knife in the air. "There is no reason why it should not do in America as well as in Europe."

Rosy opened her pretty blue eyes.

"The custard pie is always made on Aunt Hannah's receipt," she said, with housewifely dignity.

"Very nicely seasoned," assented her abstracted parent. "A little to much—pepper, perhaps."

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Mrs. Merridew. "Pepper in a pie! I suppose you mean nutmeg."

Mr. Merridew rose, and knocked over his chair. "You find ignorance everywhere, the world over, and poor people," he announced to his mystified womenkind.

"Yes, we are poor enough," observed his wife.

"Eh? So we are!" retorted Mr. Merridew, evidently startled into self-consciousness by this sententious statement.

"Oh! if Harry only had a thousand dollars!" sighed Rosy, clasping her plump hands under her dimpled chin.

Rosy Merridew was fair to look upon, and her presence brightened the dingy little city room, even as it gladdened the hearts of her parents. Sunlight and lamp-light alike rendered her hair a curling golden halo about her fresh young face, where an expression of trouble dawned at that allusion to the poverty of the Merridew connection. A slender purse had not robbed the girl of a single dimple, however, while the toilets devised by her own ingenuity out of cotton print and wool, in imitation of the silk and brocade of fashionable show cases, were of surprising variety, and invariably becoming.

Mrs. Merridew was of a gaunt and grim exterior. She kept a vigilant eye on the household, and was prone to reminiscences of the mountain village where she was born. A pot of geranium bloomed on the window-ledge, as a *souvenir* of hill pastures and the scent of the woods. Mrs. Merridew could count the pennies with frugal care, and hoard shining coins in a money-box with a yellow chimney, but she was helpless in the store, and felt oddly shamefaced behind the counter.

"Your father's got some plan in his head," remarked Mrs. Merridew, when the master of the house had whisked away from the supper table with a celerity of movement peculiar to him.

"Of course he has," assented Rosy, nibbling a crumb of pastry, in defiance of all the laws concerning complexion. "Father is the smartest man in New York—except Harry."

"So he is," affirmed Mrs. Merridew, with loyalty.

In the mean while Mr. Merridew had returned to the store and lighted the gas. His daughter's words still echoed in his ears. "Oh! if Harry only had a thousand dollars!" He was a small and wiry old man, with shrewd and cheerful countenance, blue eyes that twinkled behind his spectacles, and a pair of large ears which rendered the sparseness of his gray locks the more conspicuous. An upright man, although making so little stir in the world, he owed nobody a penny. "Live within your income, if it is only sixpence a day," was the creed of plain John Merridew. It is true he enjoyed few chances of doubling the sixpences, and perhaps would have lacked the bold enterprise requisite to grasp passing opportunity by the hair in some brilliant speculation had it come to him.

"I wish Harry might get the thousand dollars which would set him up in life," he soliloquized.

He turned down the gas a trifle, then re-arranged the stock of newspapers and fresh magazines on the counter. Books lined the shelves, while a small circulating library of dingy volumes in uniform binding occupied one side of the place. Mr. Merridew nodded at the books, as if taking them into his confidence, then placed a table in a remote corner, with a chair behind it. He next attached a curtain of green cambric to a hook in the wall by a loop, and drew it across the intervening space to a second hook in the opposite wall, thus screening the table from public view. An inkstand, a rack of pens, and a case of white ruled paper were supplemented. A large piece of pasteboard fashioned into a placard was produced from a drawer of the table, and bore these words, inscribed in large characters:

Letters Written Here.

Apply Within.

The bell attached to the door tinkled sharply. A young woman approached, and glancing over the curtain at Mr. Merridew, burst into a musical laugh. At the same moment Rosy ran in to greet the new-comer, and paused in surprise at the unusual aspect of her father seated in the curtained recess.

"Laugh on, girls," said the little old man, rubbing his hands together with good-humor. "Glad to see you, Maggie, my dear. Perhaps the curtain should be a leetle higher—eh?—as you can see over it. I was reading in the newspaper this morning about the public letter-writer of other lands. There is the scribe of the East with his ink-horn in his girdle, ready to do any man's bidding, and there is the letter-writter of Italy, Spain, and France, with some little nook where he can be found by despairing sweethearts, and others whose early education has been neglected. I took a prize for neat penmanship once, and I still have a writing class or two, you know. Now I am going to hang this placard in the window to-morrow morning, and if I make a pot of money writing letters, I will help Harry on a bit."

Rose slipped her arm around her parent's neck and kissed him on the top of his bald head.

"The newspaper is the history of the entire world for a single day, as some great man has said," remarked Margaret Lewiston, accepting an office stool, for she was very tired.

She placed an old and dilapidated bandbox on the floor beside her as she spoke, and consulted her watch.

"Where did you get that bandbox?" cried Rosy.

Margaret laughed, and raised it to the level of Mr. Merridew's table for public inspection.

"The bandbox looks as if it might have held your great-grandmother's best bonnet, Rosy," she said. "Handsome as it is, I am going to ask you to stow it away somewhere for me. How did I come by the thing? Why, I met Héloise Michant; she had been to my house to beg me to keep the bandbox for her, so I took possession of it then and there, and brought it around here, as I have a message to deliver from Harry."

"Who is Héloise Michant?" inquired Mr. Merridew, eying the bandbox askance.

"When I took charge of the Perkins children in Europe last year, their mother hired Héloise Michant in Paris, and brought her on home with us," Maggie explained. "The girl is Alsacian, I believe. She was frightened and homesick, poor thing! I did not suppose she remembered me, yet she knew even my address, it seems. A sister has arrived at Baltimore, and she wished me to take charge of her worldly goods while she went to seek the new-comer. She is not sure of retaining her place afterward. I met her near my house, and promised to do so; then I decided to come here instead."

"Why didn't she take her bandbox with her?" demanded Mr. Merridew, gloomily.

Both girls laughed merrily.

"It would not hold together for a journey," giggled Rosy, lifting a torn edge of the cover so that the contents could be seen—some fragments of faded silk and ribbons, the finery dear to the heart of maid-servants, since all distinctive costumes of class have been abandoned in favor of tawdry imitation of the mistress.

"How well it is tied together, though!" said Mr. Merridew, alluding to a quantity of fine cord knotted about the box in such a manner as to retain the cover in place.

"I will put it away in my closet, Maggy," said Rosy. "You have enough on your hands without stray bandboxes, dear."

Margaret Lewiston was tall, large, and twenty-five years of age. She was attired in mourning, with a ruche of crape about her throat instead of a white collar—a costume which enhanced the pallor of her complexion and the warm tones of her abundant auburn hair, gathered in a superb mass at the back of the head. Severe simplicity robbed her of youthful coquetry, while the carriage of her shoulders evinced a resolute nature. She had firm faith in her personal plainness, and her world accepted her at her own valuation. She would have cut off her red hair with a relentless hand, had she not feared that her droll aspect, thus shorn, would make the children laugh: she was a teacher in one of the great public schools.

She loved the dimples, the pink-tinted cheeks, and graceful figure of Rosy Merridew with a generous appreciation of the beauty of another rare among women.

Harry's message delivered, she departed to attend a teachers' meeting, and a friendly ray followed her from Mr. Merridew's door. The night was clear and cold, with Christmas three weeks away. Ice crusted the pavement, and the shops were bright with holiday decorations. Margaret quitted the Sixth Avenue, where the store was situated, directing her steps toward the east side of the town. As she reached the corner of a crowded thoroughfare a light blow of a cane swept off her hat. Surprised and indignant, she caught the hat, and turned to discover the aggressor. A man had just climbed the steps of a cellar restaurant with a freshly lighted cigar in his mouth and a stout walking-stick under his arm. His flowing beard and wide-brimmed felt hat proclaimed him an artist. He had been dining at an Italian eating-house on minestra, macaroni served in bowls, crisp frittura, and salamé, in remembrance of similar meals partaken of in vine-draped pergole of the Roman Campagna, or on the rocks of Capri—banquets flavored with laughter, and flasks of golden Lacrima Cristi, and the red Falerno wines.

"You should be more careful with your cane, sir," said Margaret Lewiston, curtly, standing there in the full brilliancy of the gas lamp.

He made no reply, but gazed at her intently. As Maggy replaced her hat and hurried away, a curious thing happened. Amid the roll of heavy vehicles, the crack of whips, the tread of many feet, two voices reached her ear distinctly, as a thread of sound sometimes pierces a tumult of mere confused noise. The first voice said, in the French language,

"Did you see her?"

"Yes," replied the second voice.

"Would you know her again?"

"Trust me for that, my friend."

Maggy shuddered, and yet she glanced behind her as she turned the next corner. The man who had emerged from the restaurant seemed about to part with a comrade in the crowd.

"Can they have meant me?" she wondered. And again that nervous shiver chilled her blood.

II.—MR. MERRIDEW SETS A TRAP.

Next day Mr. Merridew adjusted his placard in the window. He imagined that the eye of the street would be immediately attracted to the unusual announcement of letter-writing. He waited, like a hopeful spider, with the curtain of the recess closely drawn, nor would he suffer any disturbance of the arrangements made about the table overnight. No flies entered the web. As the early twilight fell Mr. Merridew's disappointment acquired a phase of excitement. He refused to eat his supper, quite pettishly, and sat bolt-upright at his desk, as if fearing some precious opportunity would escape him should he desert his post. Vigilance received unexpected reward. In the dark the burly form of a man passed the show-window, where a gas-jet flickered, returned slowly, and finally paused to read the placard. The next moment he entered. A heavy overcoat completely concealed the outline of his figure, which was of medium height, while a fur cap and worsted muffler about the throat rendered even his face indistinguishable, save for a reddish beard. He coughed, glanced about the place, and inquired in broken English:

"Is it here de letters write?"

"Yes," said Mr. Merridew, and led the way to the recess.

"How much you charge?" continued the stranger, warily.

"We will settle all that," said Mr. Merridew, briskly. "Are you a foreigner?"

"I am a German. I come from Wurtzburg. Sprechen Sie Deutsch? No? You see, I vish to write—some—to my boss out West, James Perkins. I can talk like sixty, but you must fix up a letter nice. Hey?"

Mr. Merridew dipped his pen in the ink to signify his comprehension of the situation. In his own mind he decided to add to the trap in the window the additional bait of letters written for foreigners as yet unfamiliar with the language. The first missive of this polite letter-writer was long and discursive. Inquiries were made about the family of Mr. Perkins, the brewery, and the savings-bank at Milwaukee. A minute history was given of Gretchen Müller's lover Max, who had taken to evil ways. The epistle was signed Johann Strauss.

"Can you say more—just a word?" asked the man.

"I suppose you mean to add a postscript?"

"Dat's it. Just so."

Then Mr. Merridew wrote at dictation the following postscript:

"Beware of wounding your own hand with the knife. Never trust fine ladies who play the governess."

The name of James Perkins was inscribed on the envelope, but without other address, for the man could not find it. In vain he fumbled in all his pockets for the scrap of paper on which number and street had been treasured. Finally he paid, promising to return in the morning for Mr. Merridew to complete the task, and, taking the letter to read to his wife, went away.

Left alone, the closing words of the letter reverted to Mr. Merridew's mind.

"That was a queer postscript to send a Western brewer," he mused, rubbing his nose with his pen. Then he upset a box of wafers with his elbow, and was obliged to grope for them beneath the table on hands and knees. A gold piece lay on the floor directly under the table. He seized and held the treasure near the light. At a first glance it appeared to be a twenty-franc gold coin, but on closer inspection it proved to be a medal of Napoleon Bonaparte, commemorative of the battle of Marengo.

"The man must have dropped it from one of his many pockets," thought Mr. Merridew, dazzled by the shining gold. "I will give it to him when he comes back with the address for the envelope."

The next day passed. The man never returned, but the placard disappeared from the shop window, almost magically, unless a woman took it who entered to beg.

III.—MARGARET IS TRACKED.

Harry Lewiston was of a sanguine temperament, yet he could not deny that the prospect of the opening year was gloomy. He wished to marry Rosy Merridew, for whom he felt a rapturous devotion. He was a clerk in a chemical manufactory, and as he possessed unusual quickness of intelligence, his employer had promised to promote him to the post of book-keeper on the 1st of January if he would invest the sum of one thousand dollars in the business. This advancement meant an increase of salary, marriage with the girl of his choice, and a home.

"He might as well ask me to fly to the moon on a broomstick," grumbled Harry, with a wrinkle in his white forehead. "How am I to get a thousand dollars scraped together by the new year? Does he expect me to take the first old gentleman by the nose I happen to meet in the street and demand the sum or his life?"

He was two years older than Margaret, and had always cast the burden of care on her shoulders since childhood. She had made him a home on the fourth floor of a shabby house located on a dirty street. Brother and sister belonged to the class of toilers who must earn their own bread in large towns. She revelled in her abode, and, like Mrs. Merridew, dreamed of fresh fields, with a pot of plants growing on the window-ledge. On holidays Maggy baked and scrubbed, washed and mended, setting her house in order with a careful hand. "Boarding would bring me to an untimely grave," she said. "I like to make my own oatmeal porridge, and break the tea-cups myself."

A light step on the stair aroused Harry from his lugubrious meditations, and Rosy Merridew appeared on the threshold, wearing a captivating jacket of blue cloth trimmed with gilt buttons.

"I did not expect to find you here," she exclaimed, all smiles and blushes.

Harry took her in his arms and kissed her. "I have a business appointment at noon, before going to the factory," he said, after this agreeable preliminary embrace.

Maggy warmly seconded the caress, and put on her bonnet. She was going shopping with Rosy, as the day was Saturday. The two girls departed in gay spirits. Ten minutes later other steps ascended the stairway, and a small boy knocked at the door, demanding a bandbox left with the lady by a poor girl.

"There's no bandbox here, and I never heard of one," said Harry, testily, after searching the premises. Harry believed that there had been some mistake, and, with his accounts adjusted, went out, dismissing the matter.

Nobody in the great city extracted more enjoyment from a holiday than did Margaret Lewiston. On the present occasion she went about with Rosy, and at noon they ate chocolate cakes at the counter of a confectioner, after the manner of womenkind.

"Oh, Maggy, if we could see the skating at the Park!" exclaimed Rosy.

"Come along, then," rejoined the valiant Margaret.

"I must run home first and tell mother."

Rosy sped away, while Margaret lingered before a shop window resplendent with velvet and satin fabrics, wondering vaguely how it would seem to be thus arrayed instead of condemned to flimsy black cashmere. A man paused beside

[*Continued on page* 828.]

A CHRISTMAS MEMORY.

[*Continued from page 825.*]

MR. MERRIDEW'S GOLD PIECE.

her. She recognized the bearded individual who had knocked off her hat on that evening a week before when she went to the teachers' meeting. She edged away with a flush of resentment. To walk rapidly along the street only confirmed a suspicion that he was following her. Why? Her heart beat more quickly. She entered a large store, and passed out at right angles by another door. The second street gained, Maggy slipped into an area behind the ash-barrel. After waiting a few moments she smiled at her own cowardice, emerged, doubled back, and regained her post of waiting for Rosy, with a certain exhilaration in having led her follower a fruitless quest. Scarcely had she resumed her place when a hand grasped her arm, while a voice said:

"This time I have you."

Maggy grew pale. The bearded man was again beside her.

"What do you wish?" she murmured, faintly.

"Much," he replied, with coolness.

"How dare you touch me!" she exclaimed, with sudden courage, for she saw Harry and Rose approaching arm in arm.

"I beg your pardon. For Heaven's sake don't run away again!" cried the stranger, striding after her as she hastened toward the lovers.

"Harry is going with us to the Park!" was Rosy's joyful announcement.

"Ask this—person—to explain his conduct," said Maggy to her brother.

The stranger stood his ground. He continued to gaze at Margaret with an absorbed expression.

"I never saw hair like that out of Titian's country of Cadore," he said, meditatively.

"My hair!" echoed Maggy.

"Will you all come with me?" he inquired, hurriedly.

Harry assented, while curiosity struggled with disappointment in Rosy Merridew's breast.

Richard Woutner was an artist, with a studio in a neighboring building. He led the wondering group into a spacious room, with a large window to the north, and all the picturesque confusion characteristic of such quarters. Margaret submitted to standing in the light, and with a deft turn of her fingers brought the coil of golden red hair down on her shoulders, whence it fell rippling below her waist. Never was flimsy black gown covered with a more superb mantle than those abundant locks, tawny in shadow and warm living gold in the light. Harry and Rose regarded this mane with a new respect. The artist revelled in its silky fineness and warm tones. Maggy looked at him beneath her level brows with unfeigned perplexity.

The homage of his admiration was like some sweet and unfamiliar music. Margaret's womanhood bloomed into vivid beauty under this fostering ray.

"Wait!" The artist dragged rich stuffs from a chest, and stripped a cloak from a lay figure in the corner. Maggy's every-day raiment was concealed by a sheen of velvet and damask; her tresses were caught up in a golden net. Next he twined strands of artificial pearls about her neck, and placed a great fan of feathers in her hand.

"She looks like a queen," sighed Rosy.

Was this their plain Maggy? When Richard Woutner's face was on a level with that of his model they gazed into each other's eyes, and his lips trembled. He seized his painting materials with a sort of rage.

"How can I hope to reproduce the shadow of such a creature?" he said, fiercely.

Brother Harry was dumfounded. Margaret, the queen, stood calm and stately in her rich mantle.

"Why did you knock off my hat?" she asked.

"I did not touch you," he said. "I caught a glimpse of you, though, and have tried to find you ever since."

"Ah, yes, I understood when you said that you would know me again, in very good French," she replied, archly.

"I don't know what you mean. I never spoke a word of decent French in my life," he said, now working rapidly.

"Strange," said the model, thoughtfully.

An hour later, Margaret approached Rosy and Harry in the window.

"I am ready, children," she said, with her most maternal manner.

Suddenly she started. The window overlooked the rear of a house with which she was familiar. This mansion was the home of Mrs. Perkins, and in the yard Héloise Michant was playing with two children; her crimped cap and white apron formed a pretty contrast to their crimson jackets. Evidently the girl had not gone to Baltimore. What did that mean?

Returning home after the eventful day alone, for Harry had paused at the corner grocery for a package of sugar, Margaret was astonished to see a man emerge from her door, of which the key was in her pocket. Before she could speak he sprang toward her, and pinned her arms to the wall.

"What have you done with it?" he hissed in her ear. "Give it up, or I shall kill you?"

The assault was so sudden that she was dumb. Her brain grew giddy, and lights glimmered before her eyes. All passed with the swiftness of a lightning flash. At a whistle signal the man plunged down the staircase and disappeared; just as Harry came up. Maggy staggered to the door of their modest abode. The rooms presented a scene of disorder. Bureau drawers had been opened, articles were scattered on the floor, the lid of a trunk was forced.

"Thieves!" commented Harry. "I did not imagine we were rich enough to tempt the most beggarly burglar. Stay! Nothing has been stolen, though."

Margaret uttered a cry. "Can it be the bandbox?"

IV.—THE GOLD PIECE TELLS ITS OWN STORY.

On the same day Mr. Merridew had occasion to take the elevated railroad. He was seated beside a stout gentleman of affable appearance, with a watch chain of red gold. The stout gentleman remarked to an acquaintance opposite: "The thieves might have taken anything else, and welcome; but I do not believe there was another medal of the battle of Marengo in the United States. I bought it of the great collector at Paris."

Mr. Merridew's eyes grew round behind his spectacles as he listened. The stranger had not returned to claim the medal.

"Sir, was it a gold piece?" he whispered, eagerly.

"You have been reading about the robbery in the newspapers?" said the stout gentleman, in surprise.

"No," replied Mr. Merridew.

"Ah! My name is James Perkins," said the other.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Merridew, and wiped his brow with his handkerchief. "*Is* your name James Perkins?" For the first time in his life he trembled to feel himself almost in the clutches of the law.

Explanations ensued, and Mr. Perkins left the car in company with this unexpected ally and an individual of quiet aspect, Mr. Smith by name. The trio went to the home of Mr. Perkins, where a robbery of unusual boldness had taken place. Mrs. Perkins had gone out in the morning, after the departure of her husband to his business, and, returning in an hour, had seen a poor-looking woman descend the steps of the mansion and turn away in an opposite direction. The woman had not carried even a bundle. Demanding the woman's errand of the servant who opened the door, Mrs. Perkins learned that no such person had previously rung the bell or been admitted. All the available jewelry of a fashionable lady had vanished with this mysterious visitor, and several articles of plate, together with some money. The medal of Marengo had been taken from a velvet case.

Mr. Perkins took his companions into the library.

When Mr. Merridew described finding the medal under the table, after writing a letter for a stranger, Mr. Smith produced an envelope. "This is the letter," he announced, coolly.

Mr. Merridew recognized his own pen flourishes. "That is only the postscript," he stammered.

"Probably the postscript was the kernel of the nut," quoth Mr. Smith. "It was sent to Mr. Perkins to prevent his pushing inquiry further, or to gain time by throwing suspicion on a former governess, a Miss Lewiston."

"Margaret!" gasped Mr. Merridew, in stupefaction.

"The birds can not fly far now," said Mr. Smith, who was a private detective.

In turn Mr. Merridew was escorted home, and Mr. Perkins recognized the medal.

Later, Maggy rushed into the store, followed by her brother. She did not perceive a quiet-looking man reading a newspaper in the corner.

"Mr. Merridew, where is the old bandbox given me by Héloise Michant?" she panted. "I have an idea there is something strange about it."

Rosy produced the bandbox. Whose penknife but that of Mr. Smith cut the cords, whipped off the cover, and revealed to the group of astonished spectators a diamond necklet, an emerald cross, a pearl bracelet, and several rings, cunningly wrapped in the faded finery of a poor maid-servant?

"The medal dropped from this bandbox, and not from the man's pocket," said the detective, lifting the flap of torn cover as Rosy had done.

Margaret pushed back her coronet of hair with a tragic gesture. "I have been a receiver of stolen goods!" she cried.

Mr. Smith smiled re-assuringly. "There's a difference, though, you see, miss," he rejoined.

Héloise was arrested at once, while her two brothers and the wife of the elder were apprehended as accomplices the same day. The artful scheme of implicating Margaret Lewiston as former governess, in event of discovery, by placing the jewels in her care until they could be safely withdrawn, was apparent to all. Héloise had remained in her place, the embodiment of innocence, and prepared to deny all accusations should Maggy confront her. Mr. Perkins bestowed the reward of one thousand dollars, advertised in all the papers, on Mr. Merridew.

A Christmas dinner was served in the back room of the Merridew Library that year. Mr. Merridew presided at the head of the table, ready to carve the turkey selected by himself at market. Mrs. Merridew, wearing a cap trimmed with purple ribbons, cast an anxious eye at the cranberry sauce and attendant vegetables. A delicious odor of mince-pies, wafted from a side table, revealed what Rosy Merridew had been about. The blooming maiden in a turquoise blue gown, with a rose-bud at the throat, sat beside Harry Lewiston, while opposite were Maggy and the artist Richard Woutner, whose picture of a lady with a fan had been bought on the easel by Mr. Perkins, millionaire. Maggy surprised her friends by wearing a rich brown robe and the identical golden net of the studio, which had assuredly been rifled from the coffers of some Venetian or Flemish dame. In addition, there was an antique ring on her engagement finger.

Her explanation had been frank. "He would not come to the Christmas dinner unless I promised to marry him and wear this ring. He has fallen in love with my hair, you know."

"Now, father," said Rosy, placing a detaining hand on Harry's arm, when Mr. Merridew had asked a blessing on the meal.

Lo! under Harry's plate were two bank-notes for five hundred dollars each.

"I can not accept this money," said the young man, with emotion.

"Tut! tut! You will pay me back some day," retorted Mr. Merridew, plunging his fork into the turkey's crisp flank. "Besides, Maggy had more to do with it than I did."

"What a story it would make!" observed Mrs. Merridew. "Maggy brought an old bandbox here, instead of taking it home, to keep for a poor girl. Had she left it in her own house, the thieves would have got it."

In all the town was there a merrier company than that gathered in the little back room of Merridew's Library? Mrs. Merridew produced a bottle of currant wine, made in the mountain village, her birth-place. The artist, in his coat a trifle worn at the elbows, told amusing stories of foreign lands. Mr. Merridew sang a little song, in a high, cracked voice, about filling up the bowl, my jolly souls, which made his wife fear the currant wine had gone to his head.

"I couldn't keep the money, Maggy, after writing that letter," the host confessed to his right-hand neighbor.

Time softened this remorse. Rosy, as mistress of a pretty suburban cottage, finds many ways of paying back principal and interest to her parents.

Margaret reigns in the studio. The world begins to speak of Richard Woutner since he has drawn his best inspirations from his life companion with the Titian red hair. Why not? Andrea del Sarto forever reproduced his dark-eyed wife, and Perugino braided the tresses of his bride after the fashion of the noblest ladies of Perugia. Life is everywhere the same, only the scenes shift. Maggy dawned on the dazzled vision of Richard, as he emerged from an Italian restaurant in the city of New York, with her head outlined against the darkness by a street lamp. She is invited out and known as the beautiful Mrs. Woutner, attired in odd, æsthetic raiment and festoons of old lace. Fellow-artists rave about her, to the stupefaction of Rosy and Harry, to whom she is ever the ugly duckling rather than the stately swan.

UNDER THE MISTLETOE.

By HARRIET PRESCOTT SPOFFORD.

THE fire roared up the great chimney of the lonely old country house as if each struggling flame tumbled over the other in a hurry to reach the stars and the wind that roared in unison, while it cast a thousand rosy lights about the antique room, whose dark and polished wainscot cast them forth again, to play about the massive silver of the buffet, the old portraits on the wall, and the cluster of young faces around the hearth.

Miss Sangrefield, to be sure, was not so young; she was the embodiment rather of the hoary age of her name and race. But there was Adrian, the impersonation of youth itself, the young artist whose pictures were just beginning to sell, who had come back, as often before, for the holidays, to the region where he had found his first patron in old Miss Sangrefield, and his first and last and only love in her niece, the haughty Katharine, the sole representative now of the Sangrefields, and the heiress of all the wealth they had left behind them.

Not that Adrian had ever dared whisper a word of his love; it was locked into the last fastness of his heart, and he was a jealous jailer of the least sparkle of the eye that might betray it. But as if Katharine did not know it, for all that! Some day, he reasoned, if he became famous, if his pictures sold at the fabulous prices of his dreams—and yet, even then, he did not know if he should dare; she would still be the remote, unapproachable beauty; and certain visions that he had had of life in a studio, with small income, but with a wife beside him happy in small ways, always stood in the path of any bold determination to marry a woman whose ancestral diamonds alone were a fortune. One night, he remembered, he had been dangerously near the point of testing his passion, his patience, his pride; dangerously near her, dressed for some queenly part in a play, the front of her dress thick with jewels that the women of her name had worn before her, a fillet of diamonds binding her night-black hair; some one, jostling her, had set all the jewels in a glitter, and down had fallen the coil of that fragrant night-black hair all about her to her feet—such hair as the Carthaginian women gave for bow-strings; and the jewels shook and glistened, and her great luminous eyes glistened like pale blue gems themselves, and the white hand she raised to that hair, the hand he had been about to seize—that he did seize—was so heavy with the jewels, pledges of old love, maybe, between lovers long dead and dust, that he dropped it like a weight. Was it the jewels, was it the sense of that barrier of wealth, was it her own inaccessible individuality, that hindered? He could not say. He only felt the desire of the moth for the star, and used to reproach himself that he had not the courage of the moth to fly into the consuming light; for he kept away from the Sangrefields, and only when absenting himself from a holiday festa would have made his absence more conspicuous than his presence did he obtrude himself upon the view. But now, as he looked at her, how he loved her!

Yet if, in thinking of Adrian as young and ardent enough to absorb all the youth in the room, you would be sure he had done so had you looked a second time at Miss Sangrefield, from whom all youth seemed to be abstracted, as she sat there, an image of age, with her white face, her white hair, her white laces, her white shawl, the only live or pulsing thing about her being the lights that glanced in her crimson satin draperies, and in two eyes that glimmered from their sunken pits. But there were others about that hearth with as eager an outlook on life as Adrian's; not to speak of Rose, and Mary, and Betty, and Vennard, and the rest, since they were always with us, there was the Prince Pilaty, young himself, if his pedigree dated from the founding of Rome, an attaché of legation, without sufficient visible means of support to keep him in walking-sticks, a princeling who had enough left of his family influence to attach him temporarily to a legation, and who, if he did not marry a fortune in this country, had no recourse but to become a dancing-master or a restaurant waiter. Meanwhile, being young and fond of the things of youth, he saw no reason why he should not love Katharine and her fortune too. And as Adrian looked at him he withdrew himself still farther into the moody silence that was wont of late to wrap him, for there was to his picturesque view a certain fitness of things that made Katharine Sangrefield the proper bride for a family that dated from the foundation of Rome. Now and then Miss Sangrefield looked at Adrian; now and then she looked at Katharine; now and then she twisted the loose rings on her withered fingers, or put those fingers before her eyes and looked through them at the princeling. She was very old: life lay behind her. They were very young: life lay before them. She was presently to leave Katharine. In whose hands? The warmth of her heart, the life of her soul, friend, husband, child, the whole world in one! And the thin and trembling fingers still shielded the keen old eyes that danced from the fire to the faces as restlessly as the flames themselves danced.

"How the wind blows!" said Rose, drawing up her lace mantle as if it warmed her to do so, and giving Vennard the hint to draw it up again, and linger in the drawing. "Just hear it! It sounds like the keening at a mountain wake in Ireland. Did you ever hear anything so melancholy?"

"It sounds half human," said Betty, crouching closer to Miss Sangrefield's feet.

"These huge chimneys—" began Vennard.

"It isn't the wind," said Miss Sangrefield, letting her hands fall in her lap as if life had left them.

"Isn't the wind!" cried Rose and Betty in a breath. "What is it, then?"

"It is the voice of Sarah Sangrefield."

"Of Sarah Sangrefield?" cried Katharine.

"There she hangs; look at her!" cried the old woman—"look at her in all her fatal beauty!"

"The one that resembles you so, Katharine," said Vennard.

And they all bent forward to see the likeness, as the startled girl from her low seat half turned to scan the portrait.

"Yes," exclaimed old Miss Sangrefield; "once in every tenth generation the likeness re-appears, they say. And this is Katharine to the life."

"Oh, it makes me shiver," cried Mary.

"It has made many a one shiver before," said Miss Sangrefield. "For nearly twice a hundred years it has been making people shiver."

"A ghost! a ghost!" cried one and all. "Oh! it is just the night for it. Do let us have the story." And they turned to look over their shoulders, as Katharine had done, at the picture of the lovely lady in her old court robes stiff with silver thread and pearls, with the great pale blue jewel-like eyes, the night-black hair, pearl-braided, the skin like the creamy petal of that rose which blushes only at the heart; and they shuddered, and gave little screams, and gathered closer together as the flickers of the fire-light fell on her, and made her seem to breathe and smile and move.

"Oh," cried Betty, "it is eerie enough now without any resurrection of dead and buried women. *I* want no ghost stories."

"Yes," said the old woman, not heeding, "that is Sarah Sangrefield. And many of the name have seen her walking in the great upper hall and wringing her hands. I have never seen her myself, but I have known those that have. And I have heard her often. You hear her now, all of you." And the sound, that was neither a sigh nor a wail, came shrilling about them, and aroused an answering chorus of shivers that was only part in mockery. "All may hear her weeping and wailing," said Miss Sangrefield, "but the one who sees her sees her only in warning."

"In warning?"

"In warning. It is only young girls that have seen her, they say, and they only when danger threatened them of loss of love or lover. And there are more ways than one to lose love and lover. Loss comes through pride, suspicion, jealous wrath, doubt nursed and nourished, as often as through rival beauty and charm."

"But tell us of Sarah Sangrefield," urged Rose.

"What use? I never dwelt much on these old traditions. They are best forgotten. But somehow the ghost walks to-night. Let her walk."

"Let her walk," said Katharine. "It is what ghosts are for."

Her aunt looked at her a moment. "This ghost is for something else," she said. "She was the bride of her cousin Alan Sangrefield. She had loved him from infancy. He was a part of her life. She could as soon divorce herself in thought from him as pass life in thought without the hollow heavens above, without sunshine, without stars, without the familiar field and earth and river. All at once she found her husband false to her—she thought she found him false to her, I mean. And the earth moved under her feet. The shock of the discovery, and the apparent certainty, were more than she was able to withstand. She had lost her own poise. There was nothing for her to take hold of while things whirled by. She could not realize that this was herself. And her husband, who had seemed to her a spirit of light and purity, had become, to her apprehension, a base and grovelling being. He had been the soul of truth and honor: he had become the body of deceit and shame. It confounded and confused the universe; if he was wrong, nothing then was right. She would look at him for long moments together without a word—look him through and through, as if to make out the guilty spot in him, or seek some one remnant of the old nobility to lay hands on. He endured the gaze, the long, sad, broken-hearted gaze, in his innocence hoping all would right itself; but it never righted itself; to this wretched woman the world was in disorder, and her brain was in disorder with it. Then her husband at last took active means to undeceive her, to bring the fact before her. But everything he did, her burning suspicions were able to torture into support of her *idée fixée*, that idea with which her brain was pierced as with one of the nails of the cross. No matter how tender he was with her, she shuddered, believing him to be assuming the tenderness; no matter how patient he was, she watched, lynx-eyed, believing him to be only biding his time. I suppose she really went mad; and going mad, she was conscious in the going that either he was false or she was mad, and offered no resistance, willing, thrice willing, to be mad instead. She felt herself entangled in a net-work, blind and lame. She slipped from his arms in the night, and walked the long upper hall, wringing her hands and wailing aloud. And by-and-by he wearied of it. Let him do what he would, he could not convince her that he loved her. Once he had loved her indeed, now he loved another, was the invariable sense that opposed him. She was the heiress of immense wealth; she said to herself that he would keep the peace between them for the sake of that wealth. She knew he had great pride of name; she said to herself that he pretended to love her still, lest the world should get hint of shame, or lest breath of scandal should smear the repute of that other woman, the one he loved in that sweet secrecy.

"It was impossible for him to make her believe he loved her, or loved her for herself. And so by-and-by, as I say, he wearied of it; he no longer felt patient under her doubt, her scrutiny; he became angry, proud, defiant. He ceased to care whether she thought him pure or base, true or false. He, too, passed through his phase of agony, and he simply ceased to love her. And the last state of that woman was worse than the first. Then she realized that she herself, by her doubts and her suspicions, had been the destroyer of her own peace; that the spark which might have been trodden out in the beginning had been fanned by jealous fears till it had consumed all the joy of her life. But Alan Sangrefield had himself no more joy in life; life was absolutely empty for him, and his wife saw him dying before her eyes, powerless to prevent it. Like a flash, perhaps, she saw in it all only the revelation of her own guilty doubt. And one day she disappeared. From that day to this no one knows what became of her, nor of the old Sangrefield jewels that disappeared with her." Miss Sangrefield paused a moment, and watched Katharine measuring Adrian with her furtive glance, before she went on again. "After a while Alan Sangrefield plucked up courage, took heart, took a new lease of life too, and married; he married, as it chanced, in all innocence, the very woman on account of whom his wife had broken her heart. It was the night of the wedding that Sarah Sangrefield began to walk that upper hall. The bride in her bridal chamber heard that wailing. She cowered a moment. Perhaps she was guilty, if Alan was not. And then she turned to her husband. His face was white and agonized. 'It is her voice!' he cried. And with the cry the iron entered that woman's soul.

"After all, he loved that first wife best, the new one said. It was idle for him again to assure her that all love for that mad woman had died before she died herself: the new wife had only to remember that look, that cry; she did not believe him; he loved the first wife still; he wanted her back; he longed and wearied and wept for her; he had married the second time not knowing what he wanted. Sarah Sangrefield's doubt had proved infectious. It is catching," cried the old woman, suddenly. "The new wife never recovered from that night's blow. Doubt and suspicion had hold of her. Righteous judgment, it may be, but deadly hold. And when she died she cried out that Sarah Sangrefield, in her long white shroud, but blazing under the veil of her midnight hair in all the old Sangrefield jewels like a thing of fire, her eyes like gleams of sapphire fire themselves, just as she saw her in the doorway of the bridal chamber, was waiting to take her by the hand and lead her she knew not whither. 'But into no worse misery than this,' she cried—'no misery worse than this.' And, as I say, many since that day have seen Sarah Sangrefield in her shroud and her jewels, the wind of her swift motion blowing out her cloud of hair as she went by wringing her hands; but it is only to those whose lives are likely to be ruined by doubt or by suspicion does she come. All may hear her sorrow, but few may see the beautiful horror of her face."

And then they all held their breath and listened to the sound that was neither wail, nor windy whistle, nor music, but all three; and Adrian saw Katharine draw back into the shadow, with a look upon her countenance, when the flame flared up and fell full upon her, as if Sarah Sangrefield in her shroud and her jewels, wringing her hands and wailing as she walked, were not far away.

They all started as if they had been struck when the great bell of the hall tolled eleven, and then they rose and made ready to part. "Katharine," said Adrian, as he paused a moment in bidding her good-by, and bent his head over her hand, "if the hand were not too heavy with jewels for a man to lift!" And what question there was in the eyes he raised!

"That does not hinder the Prince Pilaty," murmured old Miss Sangrefield at his elbow.

"Confound the Prince Pilaty!" said Adrian, still under his breath; and then the door had slammed behind him.

That night, having dismissed the maid, Katharine sat in her own room before the dressing-glass, not purposely, but happening to delay there thinking. "I am twenty-four years old," was the way in which her involuntary thoughts were running, "and I am the mistress of a princely fortune, and I have two princely lovers—one a prince among men, and one a man among princes." And then, she knew not by what momentary inspiration of folly, she had twisted a *rivière* of diamonds into something like the shape of a coronet, and was holding it over her brow as she scanned herself in the glass. "As for the Prince," her thoughts ran on, "I have not a doubt. It is plain certainty. He needs my fortune. With it he would bring back the ancient days of his family splendor. He would be no more a penniless adventurer attached to an exiled legation, in fear of worse, but he would be what the old Princes of his name were used to be. Nowadays some of the Pilatys mend tea-kettles; and I— The question is"—and her inarticulate thoughts, that were more sensations than thoughts, put the question plainly, baldly, coarsely—"should I have the worth of my money in that tiara, that title, that greatness? I should have love too, very likely. He is a weakling; but that I do not bargain for—I should not want. It would encumber me, be irksome to me, loathsome to me. But Adrian—" and her thoughts hesitated to shape themselves even in their hidden recesses—"if I were sure! He too is penniless, he too may see through golden gates the way to greatness. I may be, with him, merely the shadow, my wealth the substance. Oh! I have shuddered at the fear a thousand times. To doubt him now is sorrow; but were I once his wife, to doubt him then would be sorrow worse than death. If I could only know, if—" And suddenly she stopped, transfixed. Does a reflection cast a shadow? Was it her own face twice repeated in the glass? Or was that white-robed woman with the night-black hair, the lustrous eyes like pale blue jewels, the blanched and woful face, standing there behind her chair with parted, trembling lips, as if she vainly strove to speak—was that the form, the face, the ghost of Sarah Sangrefield?

It was gray morning when Katharine woke and found herself fallen back in her chair, still before the glass, where she had either fainted or fallen asleep, she could not have told you which. Who would have thought the stately Katharine would have rushed from the room and into her aunt's bed without daring to think or to conjecture? But she did; and there she lay till noon, in a sound sleep without a dream.

The girls had all been out in the woods, with their followers, for such bright berries as the birds had left, and they had been trimming the hall with hemlock boughs and laurel, when she came down the stairs. She had been getting her forces together, and had not dared encounter earlier the dissipation of the gay throng who had not a shadow of care between them, other than the idle wish that might cross their minds that they were as free from care as she. The Prince was waiting for her as she touched the last stair, and took her hand, making some courtier-like reproof for her delay above.

"I have been in trouble," she said. "I could not come down before. Prince, if I told you that I had lost all the Sangrefield possessions—"

"It is not possible!" he said, staggering backward.

"It is entirely possible," she said, calmly; and she looked curiously at the pale face that bore still the imprint of the dark Asiatic ancestor that first sought the Italian shores. "And you see, Prince," she said, pensively, "that without the fortune you thought it held, this hand is valueless to you."

"Not valueless," said the suitor, gathering his breath after the shock—"not valueless, but simply, as you say, impossible."

"Impossible," said Katharine, bowing her head.

The Prince turned with downcast face. "There is nothing left for me," said he, sadly, "but adieu."

"Adieu," said Katharine. "But first remember, Prince, I only said the loss of fortune was entirely possible, as it is to any one; I did not say that I had met with it. I have not. But, all the same, adieu;" and she turned lightly, and sent old Miss Sangrefield to hobble down the hall upon her cane and bid the lover good-by—an act which that lady made swift and emphatic.

"There," said Rose, clambering down from the table under the hall lamp, which had been lighted a few moments before, and finding herself just safe from Vennard's arms, "I believe that is the last of the Christmas greens, and now we shall see what we shall see. Nonsense, Vennard, this time doesn't count, because I have just put it up, don't you know;" and she stepped back to admire the effect of the bit of mistletoe she had twisted about the hall lamp, and whose weird waxen berries had that day come down from the Virginia woods. "Did you see the Prince take his *congé?* That sort of being doesn't know that girls seasoned by as many Washington winters as we are have seen too many of his kind not to picture him in his hours of seclusion studying the column of 'Wants' in the daily paper." And then she had thrown a shawl about her, and followed Vennard to the outer gallery for a breath of the frosty air, and the far-off airy melody of distant city bells ringing in the Christmas-eve.

Katharine came down the hall, and stayed her steps, looking up at the mistletoe, bending back her head, the white throat curving like a swan's. "It was a sacred thing once," she said, "cut by white-gowned priests with a golden knife—priests full of the knowledge of mysteries. Who knows that it is not a sacred thing now, that it has no occult powers—" And just then she glanced in the long hall mirror, and who was this that had come in as Rose and Vennard went out, that stood there, the hat half lifted to the face, the face radiant with youth and hope, the color fresh upon the cheek, the sparkle splendid in the hazel eye, the yellow hair clustering round the white brow like a young Greek god's! Seen even in a mirror, there was no mistaking the passion of that glance, the hope, the fear, the hesitation, the gathering determination. Should she tell this man that it was a possible thing to lose the Sangrefield possessions? Never! It was possible, indeed, to lose wealth, but not possible ever again to insult Adrian with a suspicion. Suddenly the color flushed up her throat and face as she gazed, and in another moment she felt the tears would spin out of her eyes if those eyes had not caught sight of the book of photographs and autographs lying on the table before her—one of Miss Sangrefield's memorials of her guests—and she tore it open and bent above it.

But to what use? She heard the step draw near. She felt the half-extended arm behind her. She felt the warm breath fan her cheek, and then she remembered that she was standing under the mistletoe.

Would he dare to take advantage of that? To make a jest of his love? Suddenly she faced him. The others had all gone singing and dancing and laughing under the archway to light the Yule-log on the dining-room hearth. "Adrian," she said, the face flushing again, all but the white forehead, the white down-dropped lids, "I have seen Sarah Sangrefield." And then the crimson swept over the forehead too, and the beautiful face grew red and redder; and what was there to do but to hide it, and where should she hide it but on Adrian's breast, as they stood there under the mistletoe, folded so close that doubt could never come between them?

A FLASH OF GOOD FEELING.

By ROSE HAWTHORNE LATHROP.

"In a Christian community like ours," said Compton, one day, as he looked up from a note which he had just finished, "it really does seem strange that"—here the telephone called him from his desk, and his partner was obliged to ask him for the rest of his sentence before he concluded—"why, that a man can't trust his office-boy with a single paltry dollar without his peculating it."

"If he were to steal one hundred thousand dollars, now," responded the partner, turning his newspaper, "you would understand and even condone it."

"Certainly. Largeness always explains itself. We all admire an affair that is great, no matter what else it is."

"There is a term, 'it's a great shame,'" suggested the partner.

"Well, I'll tell you what isn't a great shame," Compton went on, "and it is the way in which Tom Winters improves both shining and cloudy hours here on the street. He'll be a very rich man, Paine. And he's as good as he is beautiful, too. He has an almost absurd way of sparing the other fellows when they particularly need sparing. Asked me to dinner, and I'm going, by Jove!"

"Certainly; it wouldn't do to snub a man of principle, Compton," responded his partner, who was a quiet man, and never did much besides responding and suggesting to Compton's loud assertions and imperious silences. "He's almost the only chance we have for airing our courtesy, and we can't afford to lose it. Winter is a good fellow, as you say, and proves that one can be keen and virtuous in business at least. The other fellows are all treating him as if they thought so, I notice."

"You mustn't cringe, though, Paine; you mustn't be *too* polite, you know," said Compton, warningly. "It is hard to withstand the fancy that these fortunate men exhale a contagion of luck, and we try to suck it in, bowing and courtesying; but the fact is, we only lose what strength we have in that way. Let Winter succeed with a 'bravo,' but not with a 'by your leave.'"

"Perhaps the reason why we all see so minutely the necessity of preserving our dignity in his presence is," Paine suggested, "because we none of us do. Call it by whatever name I will, I cringe, Compton, along with the rest of you."

In the course of a brief interval Tom Winter, above referred to, on account of consideration for a man whom he had befriended and trusted, illustrated the reverses of Wall Street by losing heavily, and in the course of a week's manipulation of stock he was a ruined man. This disaster repeats itself often enough to become a bosom companion, as it were, to all speculators and brokers. It seems hardly more than a chance slip of destiny's axe that it does not happen to us that we ourselves are severed at the root, never to stand firmly again.

Winter, however, looked like an isolated case, as he sat alone in a small room in one of the second-rate hotels of the city. On the table beside him were an empty beer bottle and an empty purse. They both had an air of petty importance, which only mocked him. Why should his hair grizzle and his heart ache with that dull, fateful lethargy which seems to herald the death hour, simply because he had finished off a little red liquid and exhausted a little leather wallet? Was life really turned into the world to shift for itself upon such contemptible dependencies as food and coin?

Winter gave a thought now and then to a girl to whom he had been engaged, and who would not have him now. He thought of her as seldom as possible, for when her earlier image, her past tenderness, her present aspect, came before him in this lonely review of his changed fortunes, his mental vision reverted also to a revolver in the top of his trunk, where its steel brilliancy burned invitingly in wait for a firm grasp, a pressure of the finger, and the last possible *dénouement*.

She had pale hair of a cold brown, and plaintive lines to mouth and cheeks—and she was false.

Winter was a good business man in more senses than one—one sense having made his splendid success, the other his failure. And Winter knew the tactics of his peculiar form of warfare too well to suppose that he could ever recover his ground. His little inheritance was gone, with all its subsequent accumulations, and any one can realize as well as Winter did how much valid hope there is left when this is admitted. A balloon abandoned to the invisible regions of air could not be further off than hope in the man's reckoning.

But surely he had a friend, a dozen friends, to see to it that he got another throw for the stakes which were the dearest object of men's ingenuity in the pulsing city! Were any feet gradually approaching his door with plans for relief? Even the proudest men feel soft breezes of weaker longing breathe upon their souls in the extreme moment. Winter was stoical, but he felt the relaxing glow of a moment's confidence in the world. No hope, but a weak confidence. Was it justified?

At Compton's office half a score of men were standing, or sitting, or propping themselves up in all sorts of half-exhausted or especially energetic attitudes. Some polished their glistening hats as they talked, and then deposited them, apparently with the object of securing their safety, at precarious angles on their heads; others were satisfied with merely pottering about their teeth and nails, or even staring at the frescoed ceiling. There did not seem to be any one present who, in spite of faultless freshness, could be strictly called a person of cultured sensibilities. Persons of this order must have had engagements elsewhere.

"I am positive something ought to be done," said Paine, with unusual authority of manner. He was the only shabby man in the room; but his face was alive with an expression fit to command respect where there was any respect to be had. "I can't hear that the man is really in want without knocking you all up, so to say, to see if his affairs can't be righted. If we could get ten thousand for him, it would be at least a sign of fellow-feeling."

"I'm afraid it would seem a little like sending flowers to a funeral," remarked a small young man with grayish hair, who gazed at the nails of his left hand before, during, and after his suggestion.

"Yes," replied Compton, "just about as useless, Paine. And I don't know that I want to pay a thousand dollars for a graceful tribute to his memory. For of course a man down like Winter can never breathe again, unless he goes on a successful mine, or has some other awfully lucky luck."

"I'm about as anxious concerning my own affairs," volunteered a man in a corner, whose eyes shone steel gray, "as Winter can be about his. I wish some one would offer me ten thousand, a week from now."

"You must be jolly rich, Fenwick, to talk like that," Compton retorted, coolly laughing.

"Paine," spoke up an imaginative man with a furrowed face, "you are in a dangerous place. I have been attacked by fits of Good Samaritanism like this of yours; but I found our stamping ground here the one spot in this country where the mood for Samaritanism couldn't be allowed."

"Yes, it's against our principles," joined in a slender and plain dandy of sanguine complexion.

Paine looked at the last speaker with a peculiar expression of distress. The man was so ill made, had so little breadth and muscle, and so carefully assumed an air of bravado on account of his lack of stamina, that, with his ugliness, his insolence was intolerable. But, like most intolerable things, it had to be borne all the same. Paine at last turned his gaze, by preference, to the floor, and resumed his address.

"I am sorry to have incommoded you, gentlemen; but the telephone is so handy and suggestive. I see you are thoroughly bored by my scheme for helping Winter out of his fix, and I suppose he'll have to make the best of my poor share. Somehow or other, though, I can't help remembering certain things (sometimes they seem almost mythical, to be sure), certain youthful impulses and sympathies, perhaps, which wear off some of us like gilding—if it was only gilding! In short, I can not get rid of the idea that, after all, we are all Christians, and as Christians may sometimes recall the old proverbs, or whatever they were, about 'doing to others,' and so on, in the genuine old way, if only out of respect for what we should long for ourselves if we needed help."

Some of the men fancied that they must be blushing for Paine, although a mirror would have relieved them of this uneasiness. Others smiled nervously, as they would have done if Paine had confided to the conclave that he daily attended a mass for the peace of his grandmother's soul. The young gray-headed broker, brushing off his knee with one of his well-groomed hands, hazarded, without looking up (for he seldom did so), the sentiment, as probably popular, that he did not suppose any one believed in Christians nowadays. When had one last been seen?

This relieved every mind, and the conclave changed its position, laughing.

"What particular interest have you in Winter, Paine, old boy?" asked the broker of imagination, quickly.

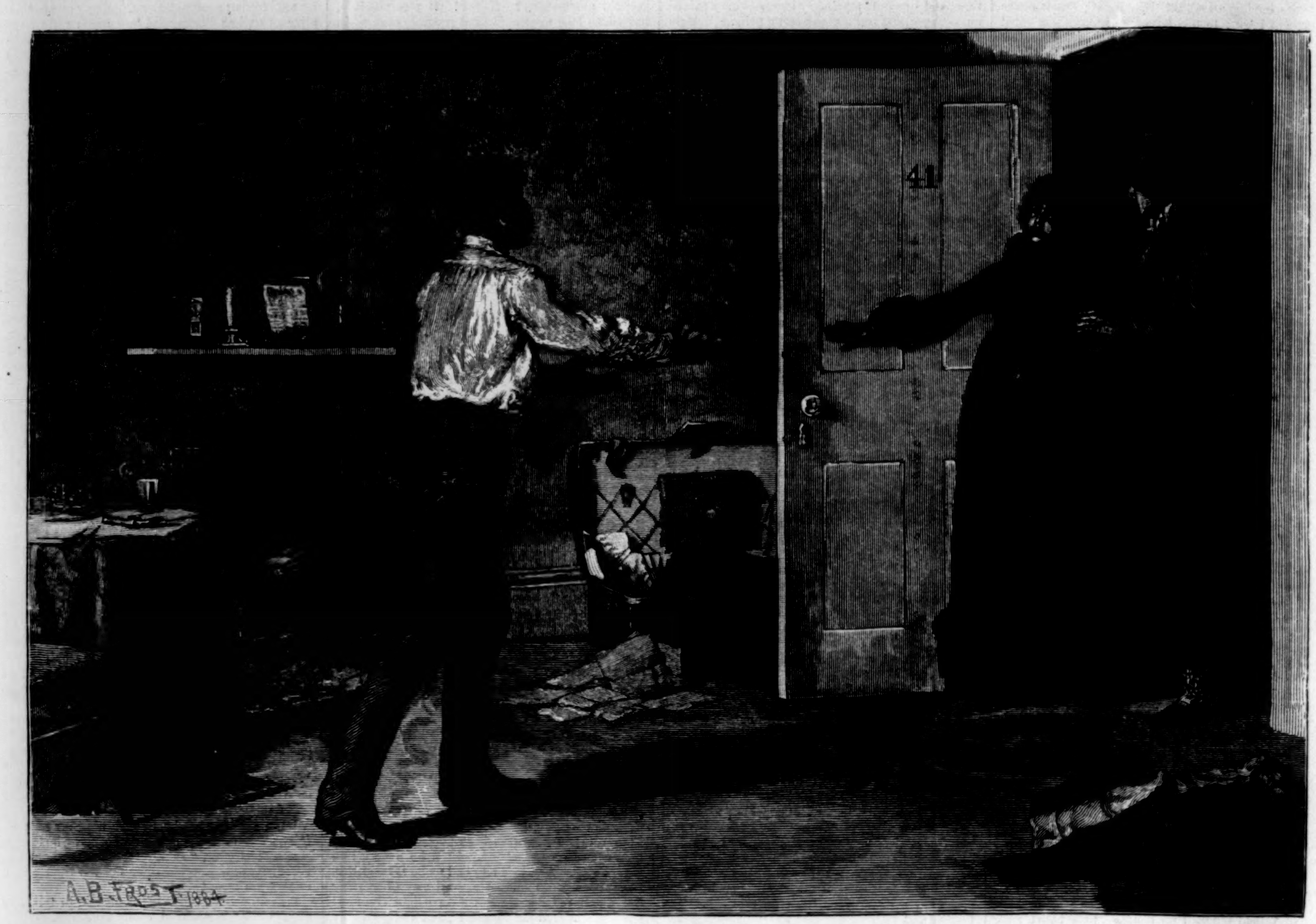
Paine got up, and made his presence felt.

"If you will reflect for yourselves," he answered, "I need not tell you. Did not we all like him, and approve of his manner of doing business? Was he not occasionally generous?"

"Oh, well, an attractive, lucky fellow," put in a very stout man, painfully packed into his cleanly shaven skin. "My dear sir, you must be quite fresh still if you don't know what a card it is for a man to be genial, and all that."

"Rather than see Paine wretched, nevertheless," cried Compton, completely using up a toothpick in his sudden earnestness, "I will add a thousand to his."

"What! is Paine so determined as all that?" asked several of the men, in different ejaculatory



A FLASH OF GOOD FEELING—"WHAT MADE YOU COME?"—Drawn by A. B. Frost.

bursts. "That alters the case, old fellow," "Of course we'll stand by each other in worthy subscriptions, man." And so on. Only one or two demurred, adhering to their premise that a ruined man was very badly smashed furniture.

Paine hesitated. The visitors showed a tendency to reach the desks where the ink was to be found.

"Stay!" exclaimed Paine, coming forward and pounding a table with his fist, while he thrust the other into his pocket as if he had more ammunition there. "You don't need to give me your checks on this ground. You must do it for a better reason—excuse me—than for mere herdish instinct. Do it out of kindness for Winter, not out of fellowship for a scheme of mine. Can't you see what I mean?"

"You're mad, Paine," asserted Compton, keenly. "These fellows haven't time to take your point of view, and pay you a thousand apiece into the bargain."

"What's the trouble?—I can't see," said the full-fed, over-smoked broker or speculator, with some bills already adjusted between his first and second fingers.

"I'll take no such assistance as this to a man of Winter's calibre," said Paine. "You are purses, not men. Don't spill your thieves-thumbed bills in here for any interest of mine. Give me manly charity for the sake of—for the sake of all you have forsaken."

There was a very awkward pause indeed, and the door jumped open. A man in the prime of life entered the room. It is not always easy to find a man's prime, if he is very deep in the toils of business, no matter how carefully one examines his different stages, but the person who presented himself here was a silver-touched, vigorous creature of forty. There were conflicting expressions in his face; and as it was not often that there was but one expression of face on the street, and that on the shady side of desirability, Paine had always been content to make a great deal of Fairmouth's half bright, half subtle countenance.

"Look here! how far have you got in this?" he demanded, with cheerful energy. "By Jove! sirs, this looks like business, eh? A roomful of you for poor old Winter! Well, how high has it got?"

"Oh, it's only got as high as Paine's heel, I believe," replied a drawling voice which had not spoken before.

Fairmouth put a hand on one of his hips and looked round, breathing deep from his hurried walk to Compton's office.

"Paine would not lend an air of *opéra bouffe* to the thing," his superior exclaimed, turning back the cover of a box of cigarettes. "Somehow oratorio didn't seem to work at first, and our want of appreciation has made him wild. We're willing to give eight or ten thousand *for fun*, but we aren't allowed to."

Fairmouth bent his handsome brows upon Paine, and his eyes were gentle and his lips tender.

"How is it?" said he.

"See to it for me, Fairmouth," Paine answered, going to the window and looking out as if planted there for the future.

Fairmouth took one of the cigarettes and lit it with a few hasty movements, but a placid face.

"There is very little to say," said the furrowed broker, "except that he has used queer language to us, and in spite of it we have pulled out a thousand apiece. I told him not to talk loftily here—we have all that up-town. He wants us to do good because we are Christians, and some of us don't know how it feels to be afflicted in that way. We plead 'not guilty' of motives based on bread and milk. Of course we are apt to go to church, because our families ask us to; but we couldn't subsist on that fare all the week round. Well, sirs, there is my *quota*, and I must be going."

It was not easy to see how Fairmouth should quite grasp the situation at this point, but he appeared to do so completely, and said the only thing he could think of to set matters right.

"Pray don't go until we decide what message is to accompany this money for Winter."

"Oh, come, Fairmouth," cried the stout spectator, "Paine will carry it to him, and it will be natural for him to say something fine. I trust Paine's tongue."

But Fairmouth was already opening his note-book and scribbling.

"How would this do? 'Dear Winter,—Among jolly brethren like us there's no such word as *fail*. Take the accompanying solid piece of good-will, and go ahead. You were one of the best and cleverest fellows on the street. Come back.' Signed, Holton Fenwick, D. McAvery, H. Fairmouth, etc. Does any one object to that?"

"If anything, that will do, eh?" admitted the stout speaker.

"But he's in a sort of disgrace, you know," exclaimed the gray-haired youth, pettishly, and looking up this time. "It's a mistake to coddle him. It's against the code of the seers here to lend money and play parent as he did, and of course he came to wreck. I shouldn't expect any help like this if I got under the wheel, and why should I think more tenderly of Winter than of myself?"

"Neither does Winter *expect* it," answered Fairmouth, "and it's just that that makes it a desirable thing to surprise him with a dash of right feeling which he despaired of. By Jove, it will be the best Christmas he ever had when Paine reveals to him that he has not been forgotten!"

"The street is one thing, and a battle-field's another," the drawling voice remarked from behind some one.

"That's it," joined in the imaginative member. "Colonel Fairmouth, you seem to have got them badly mixed. Whoever a fellow is that's wounded, a man ought to go under fire for him; but this is very different."

"Then speculating must be unhealthy work," shot out Paine, wheeling round.

"It certainly don't seem to agree with *you*," Compton growled, eying his partner savagely.

"Oh yes, it does," Paine replied.

"Let every man here who wouldn't leave a comrade on the field to die set himself down for another thousand to Winter," Fairmouth called, pulling up the chair to the desk near which he stood, and dashing off a check for two thousand dollars.

The atmosphere of the place changed. "Bravo!" burst suddenly from some one's lips. Fairmouth got a slap on the shoulder that sent his ink spattering all over his signature.

"Who's seen the poor devil?" asked the stout speculator, sitting down at another desk, by gentle gradations, and then neatly coquetting with the ink-bottle before doing some extremely useful writing.

"It would not be half unpleasant to see him round again, with his rough tweed and an eternal ruffled smudge on his beaver," said the son of a very rich man, who had been lounging quietly and comfortably all the time. "Winter never seemed to be in the least afraid of letting the little conventionalities go, you know, but he gave a good deal of time to being respectable."

"It strikes one as odd to suddenly haul one's self up and attend to other people's affairs," chimed in a man with a large thin nose. "But it's something like waking from a sleep several years long when it does happen. Good-by, Paine. Poke Winter in the ribs for me."

The red-haired dandy and the gray young man were not to be found; but the rest wrote their checks, and shook hands with Paine and Fairmouth with the utmost good-nature, and then filed out of the office, laughing and humming.

That afternoon Winter's two friends set out together for the hotel at which he was staying. Something dashed their cheer as they reached the shabby precinct, the shabby entrance, the shabby passageways, leading to Winter's door. When Paine had seen him last he had found it hard to revive Winter out of the deepest stupor of lack of interest in all suggestions and possibilities of better things. It was a whole day since then, and Paine was haunted by the gentle smile and terrible expression of the eyes which he had last seen as Winter gave him his hand at parting.

As they turned a corner of the corridor they came upon a passage in which a young lady was standing.

There was no doubt about it from the first glance. She was standing at Winter's door, and was very much agitated. She looked round from gazing at the door, and fastened her eyes on Paine's quiet, fatherly face as he approached.

"What has happened?" he asked, greatly alarmed at her excessive pallor and darkened eyes. He wondered if she knew that Winter was dead.

"What! Are you going in? Are you—"

"We are friends of Winter's. And you wish—"

"I dare not!" she panted, leaning against the door with her hand on the knob. "What will he say to me? Something makes me feel that he will kill me when he sees me. And if I go home, it seems as if *they* would kill me."

Paine had not much idea who this young lady could be, but he was very certain of her refinement, from all the indications of voice, dress, and aspect. He could not imagine why Winter should ever dream of killing her. But he said, kindly and simply, "I will go in first, and you must try to depend on me if a great strain comes. Take Mr. Fairmouth's arm."

Paine knocked, and, as they had all guessed it would be, no answer came.

Paine called Winter by name several times loudly, and then pleadingly, with gentle words. The girl's tears dropped like crystal gems, her cheeks growing rosy with excessive excitement.

Suddenly the door was wrenched open from within, and Winter walked back into the room, saying, huskily:

'What now! Is there no peace?"

His pistol was lying on the table, and some letter-paper beside it, half covered. But his eyes, dazed with brooding and agony, all at once perceived the girl, trembling and sinking as she stepped over the threshold. He sprang to her and clasped her in his arms.

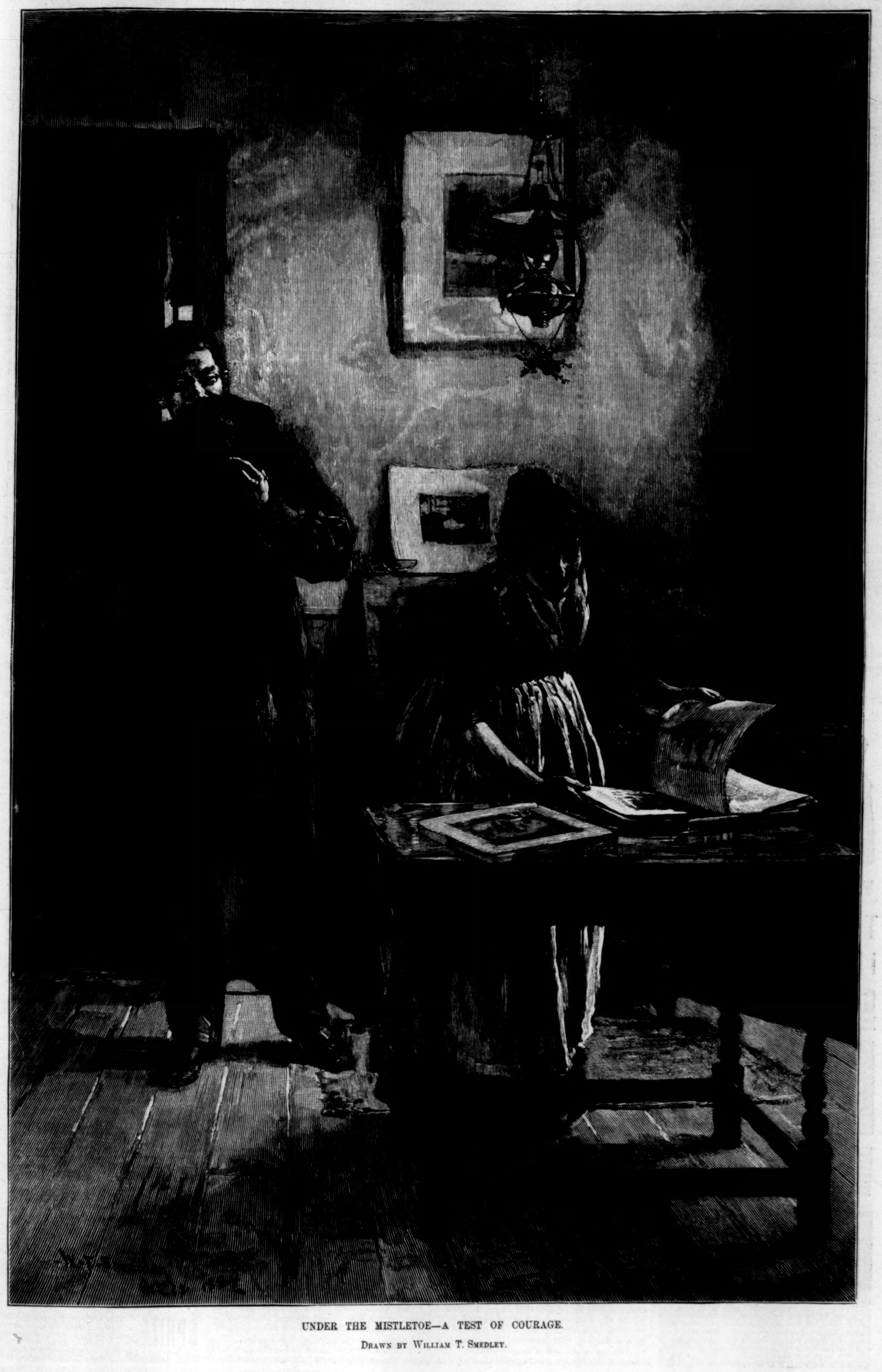
"How came you here?" he demanded; and then sobbed, "*What made you come?*"

"I saw what I had done," she murmured, laying her pale face upon his breast. In a moment she turned to Winter's friends, and said, with brave earnestness: "You see he does not kill me. I was engaged to be his wife, but when this ruin came I would not see him: my father and mother persuaded me. But if it was right to marry him in his trouble, how terribly wrong they were! And then I saw that they *were* wrong! They will never forgive me; but Tom has forgiven me. Now you will see he will not cast me off because I bring him no money. After all, he will marry me, and work for me, and he will grow gray working for me, and I will make him *glad!*"

"And here's the money to pay for the wedding," Fairmouth said, with a roguish look, giving Paine a nudge with his elbow, upon which the latter drew a package from his pocket, composed of bills and checks. "By Jove, Winter, I should not blame you if you were too glad already to hear what we came for."

"We've got something out of those would-be devils," Paine muttered, as he threw the packet down beside the suicidal letter on the table. He added, more heartily: "They've sent you a few thousand from Wall Street, Tom; for after mining about as hard as I could to find true metal in the rascals, I all at once struck it. How it would horrify them to hear that they had hearts!"

The two rescuers knew what a brave man Winter was when they saw him gulp down a sob. In all his struggle with despair he had made no such effort as he now made to keep back the tears.



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Drawn by William T. Smedley.

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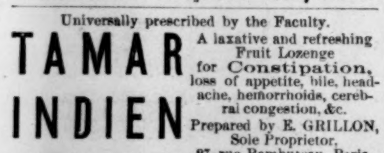

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NEW YORK FASHIONS.

FURS.

LONG SEAL-SKIN CLOAKS.

LONG seal-skin cloaks promise to be the first choice in dressy wraps this winter, because they are now fitted to the figure, and made in all the varied shapes in vogue for the richest velvet and cloth garments. The long dolman, covering the wearer from head to foot, is now made in several designs, and the weight formerly complained of as too great for the shoulders is equalized by the use of an elastic belt inside the lining, which also serves to hold the back of the waist close to the wearer in the graceful way in favor. This closely fitted back and sides of the waist, with or without fulness below, while the fronts hang straight and loose, is one of the features of new seal cloaks. The high full shoulders are also introduced for those to whom they are becoming, and the sleeves are large, so that the cloak may be easily removed; these graceful elbow sleeves open squarely at the wrist, or else they are cut flowing in the Oriental shapes. Lengthwise trimmings of a different fur in front and back are in great favor, and the border at the foot gives a rich finish, but this cross border must be omitted if the wearer is short, as it detracts from the apparent height. Full trimmings about the neck and arms are objectionable for stout figures, hence, instead of a separate collar, the trimming is now set on the lining around the neck without any seal fur beneath it; this makes the wrap less clumsy about the throat, and for similar reasons many stout ladies prefer the plain velvet-like seal in its rich beauty without any additional trimming. The untrimmed seal garment is also chosen by economists whose best outlay of money is in a garment of fine fur cut in a new and stylish shape, to which trimming may be added hereafter to effect some change required by fashion. Trimmings of short close furs, such as natural beaver and otter, are commended to stout ladies, while the luxurious long fleeces are becoming to those who are slight; among these are the royal sables in plain bands, or of tails in rows, or else pendent below the border, the dark fisher-tail, the black fox, silver-fox, the blue fox, which has stone-colored tints, or the black marten, which is effective yet not costly, and is now thoroughly deodorized.

Brown satin very slightly quilted is the lining most used, and in some garments there are gayer tints, and all quilting is omitted in order to make the garment more flexible. Bars of seal with loops of passementerie cord are the fastenings most used. Among these rich cloaks is the Ristori, with partly fitted back, open below the waist, square sleeves, and double-breasted front, with Russian collar; this is of an elegant cut that may be worn plain, but it is also shown with the rich borders just mentioned. The Galatea is a long slender cloak with the back as closely fitted as if made of cloth; the high-shouldered sleeves extend far into the back, and have seal-skin cuffs added when there is no border of other fur; it has also both a standing collar and one that is turned down. The Grêtry is only three-quarters fitted to the figure, and has flowing Oriental sleeves; both this and the Galatea are made more youthful and slender-looking by lengthwise trimmings. One of the newest models, called La Favorite, is shaped like the mantle-redingote illustrated in the *Bazar*, with the waist tight behind, while the full skirt is pleated in below; the front hangs straight, and the high sleeves are close to the arms, with deep cuffs trimmed around at their top near the elbow. This full back of the skirt is excellent with bouffant costumes. These garments also have the fronts trimmed with a fold of seal-skin, next which is the fox or sable border put on in a roll like a binding, and continued around the neck to represent a boa.

SEAL MANTLES.

Short mantles of seal-skin are among the new garments this winter. Some of these are in the shapes just noted for long garments, but are cut as short as a visite or a mantilla, falling usually longer in front than behind, where they merely cover the tournure. The short Grêtry and Galatea are graceful and warm-looking when trimmed with a mink border with pendent tails, or with black marten, or the handsome three-quarter plucked beaver bands. There are also untrimmed seal visites that are very youthful and dressy-looking, while others have passementerie ornaments on them, and clasps of carved wood or stained ivory representing two antique heads; still others are edged with a fringe made of seal-skin balls tied in meshes of silk cords.

SEAL JACKETS AND SACQUES.

Seal-skin jackets are shown in small sizes, smoothly fitted as Jersey waists are, and are known as Jersey jackets. These are for quite young ladies, are worn without any trimming, and cost as low as $75 or as much as $250. The popular seal sacque, which is always useful for long drives, for the country, and for general wear, is now made less clumsy in shape by being fitted more closely in the back and sides; the fronts remain loose and straight, and have a coat collar that may be turned up about the throat, or else turned down to form lapels. They measure from thirty-seven to forty-one inches in length, and when well fitted are very handsome either plain, or widely bordered, as many of them are, with black marten, natural 'coon, beaver, or sable-tail trimmings. Hudson Bay sable borders with tails in rows, and the narrow heading that is needed to complete them, are very effective on these sacques. In selecting seal garments the purchaser should make sure that in every part the pile of the fleece is made to turn upward, as it will then naturally drop downward and disclose its rich depths; when brushing or stroking this fur, the movement should also be upward. The reader is also again warned against allowing seal-skin to be dampened; but when this happens fur must not be dried by artificial heat, but by hanging out-of-doors, or else in a cold room.

FUR FICHUS AND PELERINES.

The novelty in small seal capes is called a fichu, and consists of a scarf mantle that merely reaches to the waist line behind, and has half-long pointed fronts. It is edged with seal-skin fringe, and has a high standing collar fastened by a fanciful clasp. The new seal pelerines so popular with young ladies, to give needed warmth over closely fitted velvet or cloth redingotes or sacques, are now made with the high-shouldered effects, and are of even length all around, barely escaping the waist line. These are by no means confined to seal-skin, but are especially liked in otter and beaver to match trimmings on fur garments. Mink pelerines are also in fashion, and are especially valuable when made of the dark tails of the animal. Russian sable pelerines of great beauty are shown made of tails entirely, and costing $650, though others of lighter sable are sold for $400. The general choice in these capes is for seal, beaver, Astrakhan, or mink, and in these inexpensive furs they cost from $40 upward, and afford great comfort, as they cover admirably the delicate chest and shoulder-blades, and are of very light weight.

MUFFS AND COLLARS.

Muffs are sold to match the capes just described, and when made round are not larger than those of last year. Flat muffs are now commended, and are slightly curved to hold the hands nicely. Sometimes these have close short fur in the back, with a different long fleece in all the part seen in front, thus the front will be silver-fox, and the back of seal-skin, or else a chinchilla muff will have merely a silk back. The long chasuble and scarf-like collars remain in vogue, and with a muff complete the set of fur; but it is now more usual to trim the outer garment with fur around the neck, and choose a muff to match. There are, however, pretty little collars of fur with square lappets in front made of natural beaver, and costing only $4 or $5; seal-skin, krimmer, 'coon, leopard, and the black Persian lamb are also used for these small collars, for the larger collarettes, for écharpes or scarfs, and the long chasubles; among black furs those of the Russian hare are chosen for inexpensiveness, of the monkey-skin for oddity, of Persian lamb for those wearing mourning, and of the luxurious black fox for richness. Satchel muffs that are useful shopping bags with a handle are shown in seal, otter, and Astrakhan furs.

SABLE AND OTHER BROWN FURS.

From what has already been said it will be seen that brown furs are again in favor, and those who have taken care of their royal sables and useful mink now find their reward. The pelerine cape and muff of Russian sable is one of the luxuries of the winter, and those who can afford it delight in wide borders of sable, and even in a lining of this valuable fur, some of the costliest wraps of the year being made of black velvet in the shape of the Russian circular, and lined throughout with Russian sable. The mink trimmings are also very effective on cloth and other wool garments, especially when the material is brown, as it is doubtless the fancy for golden brown that has revived the use of these furs. The rare sea-otter is one of the fashionable brown furs, but the brown trimming in most general use is natural beaver, and the plucked beavers, some of which are only partly plucked, and also the colored brown beavers.

FUR-TRIMMED CLOAKS.

The next choice for a dressy cloak after the long seal-skin garments is a cloak of similar shape trimmed with fur, and made either of the frisé velvets, the ciselé velvet, the satin figures brocaded on velvet, striped velvets, armures, beaded brocades, or the heaviest repped silks that have satin cords woven in at intervals. Brown and black are the colors that trim most handsomely with furs for day wraps, but for the evening there are gold and silver brocades on white satin grounds that produce very rich effects. The long Albani, the Grêtry, La Favorite, Galatea, and other garments already described are made up in these rich fabrics, lined with quilted moiré, or brocade, changeable silk, or satin, and trimmed with a wide border of some long fleecy fur, as a fluffy effect is especially desirable when the cloak itself is not made of fur; a little chenille fringe is sometimes added, and there are very rich beaded ornaments, with others made of satin cords.

Short visites with sleeves, and the scarf mantles that cover the arms without sleeves, are also made of these rich materials and bordered with fur. Some handsomely shaped jackets, with triple folds below the close-fitted back and a loose Molière front, are made of the heavy repped silks, and finished at the neck and throat only with furs. Long Newmarket cloaks and ulsters made by famous Paris modistes get their *cachet* from the trimming added by the furriers; thus there is a prettily lapped surplice-like collar of natural beaver put on a green or brown redingote, or a black camel's-hair dolman for a lady in mourning has Astrakhan or Persian lamb, or black fox fur, put lengthwise on the whole front and below the waist in the back. Large square pockets of Astrakhan or other fur are also seen on the sides of fitted cloth garments.

FUR-LINED GARMENTS.

The fur-lined circular remains in favor as a useful wrap, but is not chosen for a garment for stylish wear. There is an effort to make this simple wrap look high-shouldered by shirring it in rows across the shoulders, and using a smaller collar that does not conceal this shirring. The fur linings were made up so heavily that they have gradually lost favor, and are now confined to circulars, while the plush linings introduced to rival them have entirely disappeared. Whole squirrel linings are used for inexpensive circulars that begin as low as $28, while linings made only of the backs of the animals, and therefore gray throughout, are used for higher-priced wraps. Camel's-hair circulars lined with the gray backs cost $65, and are liked for elderly ladies, for travelling, and for those who wear mourning. The Russian sable linings, with tails hanging at intervals, are made up with Sicilienne outside, and are so luxurious inwardly that either side may be worn out. Mink linings are used in armure and figured Sicilienne wraps, and there are circulars for the opera lined with royal ermine, which may be bought for $75 or $85. A novelty for linings and also for borders is a long crinkled white fleece of Chinese fur. The small collar of fur with a black clasp is considered sufficient trimming for most circulars; borders add so much to the weight that they are seldom used.

FUR HATS AND TURBANS.

A wintry poke bonnet for a young face is made in the fish-wife shape, pointed in front, and faced there with mink. The bonnet itself is of brown velvet, with some birds in front of the crown for trimming. New seal turbans have very close brims, with high crowns that taper or that are slightly indented. Seal hats have brims that recede until they become very narrow behind, and there are also English walking hats of this fur. Birds in clusters, or else breasts mounted in long shapes, are the trimmings.

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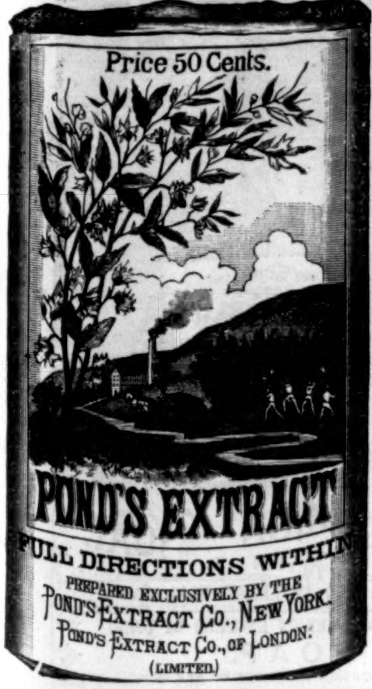
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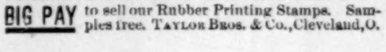
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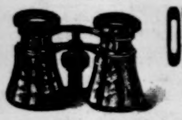

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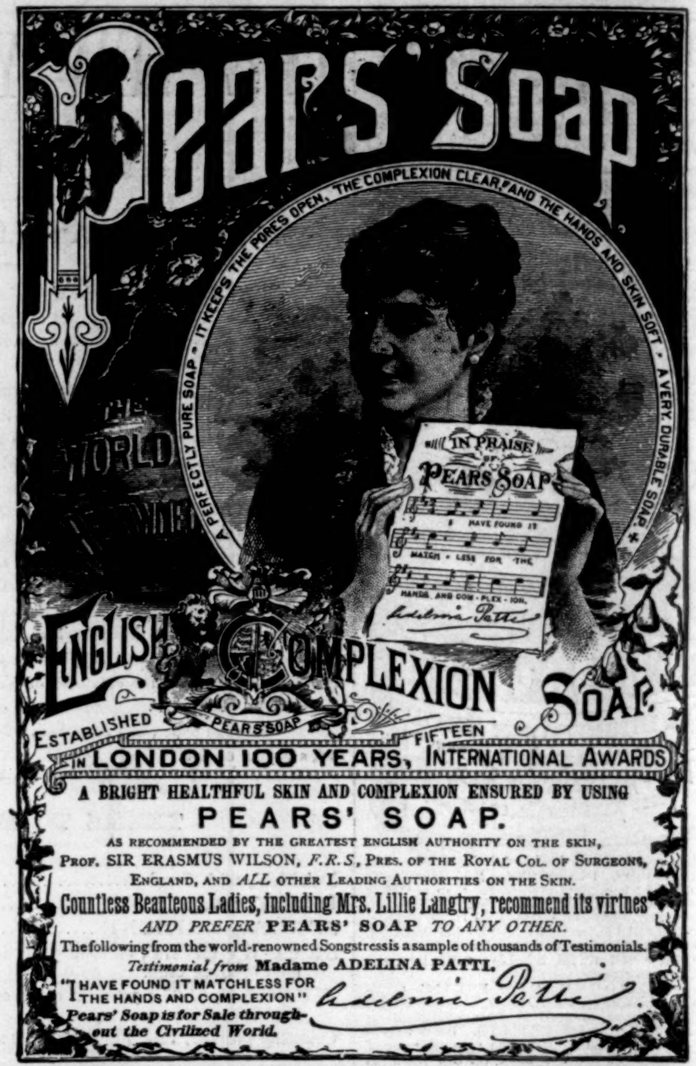
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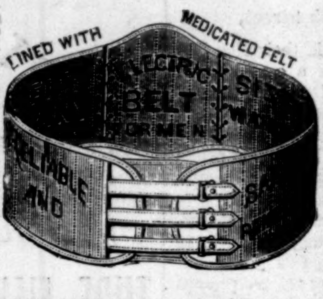

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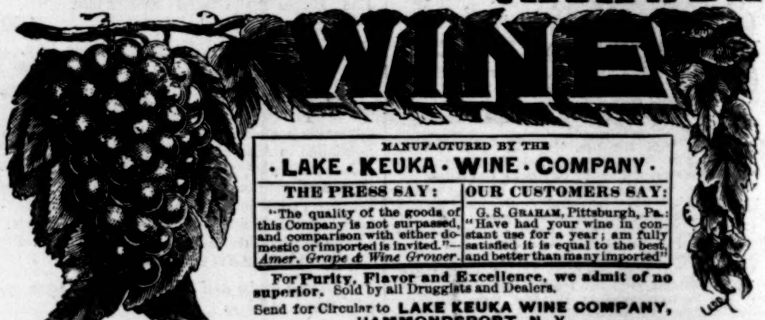

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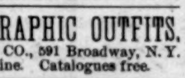

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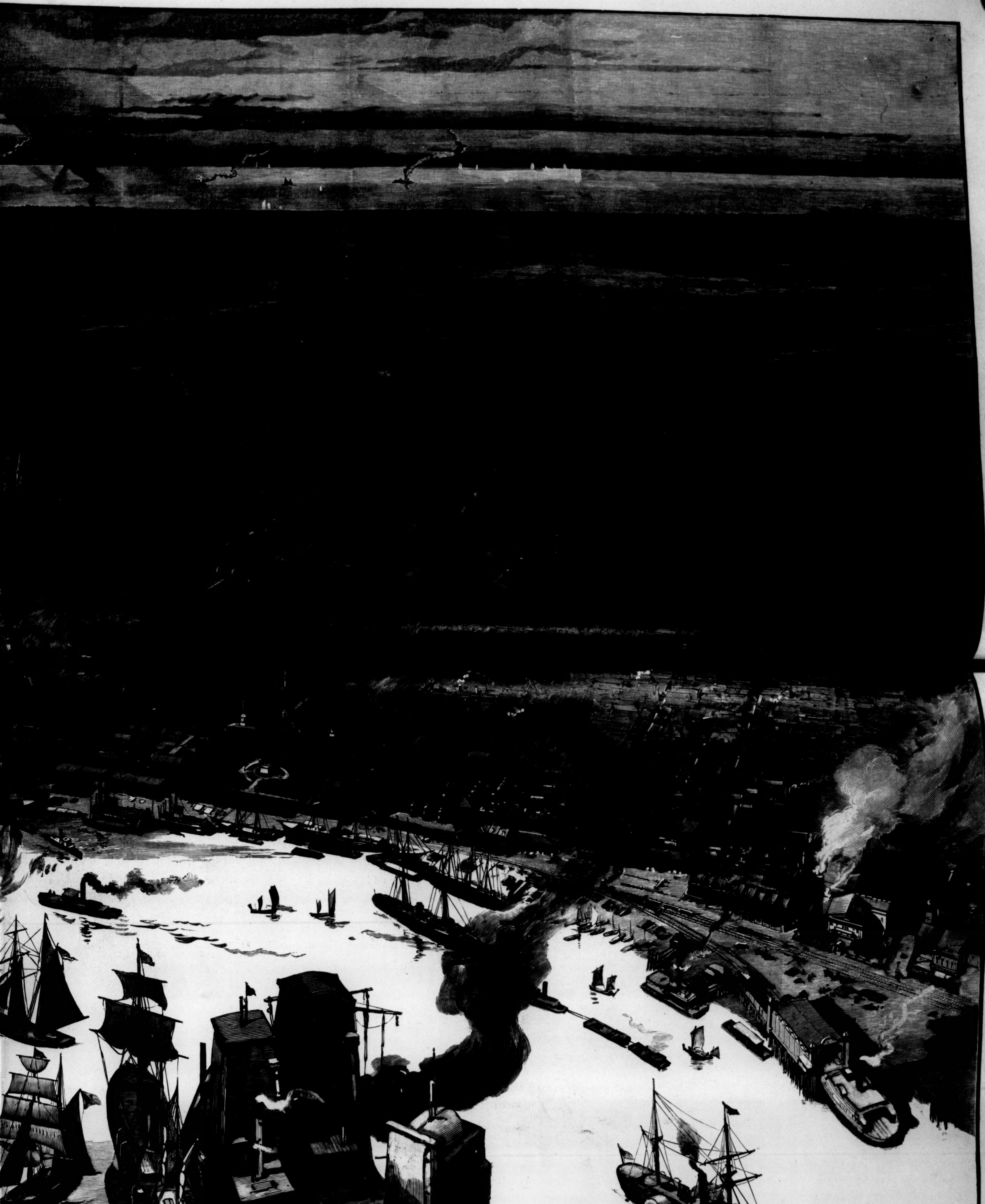
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